

EVOLUTION OF THE KHALSA

Indubhusan Banerjee

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The Foundation of the Sikh Panth

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Vol. I

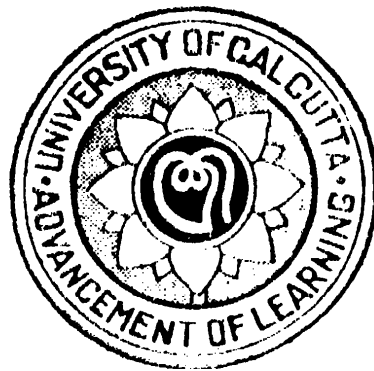
THE FOUNDATION OF THE SIKH PANTH

BY

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To
THE REVERED MEMORY
OF
SIR ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE

PREFACE

As the title of the work shows, in it I have set myself the task of tracing the evolution of Sikhism till Guru Gobind Singh introduced his reforms and brought the Khalsa into existence. For the sake of convenience I have split up the work in two volumes, the present volume covering the period till 1604 when the Granth Sahib was compiled and the peaceful evolution of Sikhism practically came to an end. I have been teaching Sikh History in the Post-Graduate classes for a period of over 15 years and the present work is the outcome of my endeavour to solve some of the difficulties that constantly confronted me. How far I have succeeded it is not for me to say but I shall consider myself amply rewarded if my book, in some measure, pave the way to further discussion and clarification.

I have never believed that there is much sense in any pedantic insistence on diacritical marks and therefore I have avoided them wherever I conveniently could. In transliteration I have followed the Gurumukhi spelling and pronunciation and consequently Veda appears in the text as Ved, Yogī as Jogī and so on.

My obligations are many and some of them have been noted in the footnotes. But I shall be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge the assistance that I received from my Gurumukhi teacher, Bhai Ajmer Singh. At the same time I would like to make it absolutely clear that the Bhai Sahib is in no

way responsible for the views expressed in this work. My sincerest thanks are due to my friend and colleague, Mr. Sailendranath Mitra, who very kindly saw through the proofs, though, needless to say, the responsibility for any errors or faults of expression is entirely mine. For the Index I am indebted to the courtesy of my pupil and friend, Mr. Anadicharan Banerjee. I would also take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to Mr. A. C. Ghatak, the Superintendent of the Calcutta University Press, and his Staff for the ready assistance that I always received.

I have supreme pleasure in dedicating the book to the revered memory of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, at whose instance I took up investigations in Sikh History. My debts to him cannot be expressed in words.

SENATE HOUSE :
CALCUTTA

INDUBHUSAN BANERJEE

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EVOLUTION OF THE KHALSA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of Sikhism presents several features of exceptional interest. Originally Sikhism belonged to the great family of popular religions that made their appearance in India in the 15th and 16th centuries. All preached the same message of love and truth, the same message of peace and emphasised, with the same sureness of accent, the great panacea of the *Name*. Ramananda and Kabir, Chaitanya and Nanak, all agreed as to fundamentals, though, no doubt, there were differences in detail. But whereas the other schools developed, more or less, on traditional lines, and after short periods of fruitful activity, quieted down into narrow, hide-bound or at best mystical sects, Sikhism went off at a tangent and ultimately evolved what has been called a church-nation. A simple monotheistic faith which found its first utterance in the hymns of Guru Nanak and which had its origin in an unostentatious attempt at social emancipation and religious uplift, became, in course of time, political in its aims and military in its methods. It evolved in turn a military theocracy, a confederation and a monarchy and its votaries exist to this day as one of the best disciplined of the minority communities of India. Further, as Carpenter points out, “starting

with a Puritan quietism which repudiated outward rites as in themselves meritorious, and conceived the life of the believer as a continued communion with God, it developed temple and service, and observances of ceremonial piety. Rejecting every kind of violence and enjoining the completest forgiveness of wrongs, it protected itself by military organisation, made disciples into warriors and turned the devotee into the soldier-saint. It announced religion in the broadest terms, broke down all barriers of caste and race, and then imposed the obligation of the sword with a rite of initiation which drew the tightest of limits around the semi-national church fellowship.”¹

Broadly speaking, we can thus trace a twofold development in the evolution of Sikhism. On the one hand, Sikhism found it increasingly difficult to maintain the catholicity of its original ideals and the simplicity of its primitive form ; on the other, the whole character of the movement changed as a peaceful sect was gradually turned into a military order and the devotee developed into the soldier-saint. For a religion to maintain the simplest of forms and at the same time retain its popular character is, more or less, impossible and it is not difficult to see that, as it progressed, Sikhism was bound to react to its environment and evolve ideals of a more circumscribed and sectarian character with forms to correspond. Further, as Wayman Bury points out, “ there is no easy road or short cut to collective spiritual progress.....the uplift of a race, a class, or even a congregation cannot be done by a sort of spiritual legerdemain based on

¹ Estlin Carpenter, *Theism in Mediaeval India*, p. 488.

hypnotic suggestion. Individuals may be so swayed for the time being, and, in a few favourable cases, the initial impetus will be carried on, but most human souls are like locusts and flutter earthwards when the wind drops.”¹ Necessarily, idealistic principles have to undergo limitations when they are to accommodate themselves to the paradox called Life. This can very easily be illustrated from the history of almost every religion which could claim votaries beyond an intellectual and exclusive group. Even the Buddha had to make allowance for the limitations of popular intelligence and formulate a *Lokiya* or practical standpoint and the inevitable result was that “the rules, laws, formalities, conventions from which he recoiled in theory, followed one another in uniform succession until a complete code, the Patimokkha, came into existence.”² Thus it is not difficult to understand how Sikhism also evolved conventions of its own, though it had its origin in an extreme reaction against conventionalism of all kinds.

But the other feature, *viz.*, the transformation of Sikhism into a military theocracy, presents a more complex problem and is much more difficult to understand. In tracing the history of the transformation of Sikhism we can discern two distinct stages of development. From the days of Guru Nanak down to the year 1604 when the compilation of the *Granth Sāhib* was completed, the movement ran on peaceful lines. Sikhism gradually detached itself from Hinduism, developed ideals and institutions of its own, and

¹ Wayman Bury, *Pan-Islam*, p. 197.

² Barua, *Prolegomena to a History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 28.

the Sikh Panth ¹ came to acquire a more or less definite meaning. And Sikhism had no quarrel either with Islam or the established State but at the very outset of the second period, which may be said to have extended from 1605 to 1699, when the Khalsa was brought into existence, we have the execution of Guru Arjan and the sudden transition to militarism under his son and successor Hargobind, which, after some moderate successes, received a set-back and then again emerged triumphant under Guru Gobind Singh. And it is interesting to note that the more thorough militarism of the tenth Guru was preceded by another execution, *viz.* that of Tegh Bahadur. It may thus appear that Sikhism retained its peaceful character so long as the State did not interfere and that it was only as a reaction to the martyrdom of Guru Arjan that Hargobind resorted to the policy of armed resistance. Under Hargobind's successors the new policy relaxed and Sikhism was possibly relapsing to its earlier path when again the execution of Tegh Bahadur brought in its train the more disciplined militarism of his successor. In other words, the transformation of Sikhism might thus be explained primarily on the ground of Muslim persecution.

But though it would certainly be a great mistake to belittle the significance of the martyrdom of two of the greatest leaders of Sikhism, such a simple statement of the matter can hardly be regarded as adequate. It leaves unexplained what made it possible for Sikhism to react to the Muslim persecution in the manner it

¹ *Panth* means a path, a way, and hence, a religious denomination.

did; and we have perforce to take a broader view of the affair.

Almost all previous writers, who have given more than a passing attention to the subject, have laid stress on certain peculiarities which distinguished Sikhism from the other reform movements. Cunningham writes, "in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Hindu mind was no longer stagnant or retrogressive, it had been leavened with Muhammadanism, and changed and quickened for a new development. Ramanand and Gorakh had preached religious equality, and Chaitan had repeated that faith levelled caste. Kabir had denounced images, and appealed to the people in their own tongue, and Vallabh had taught that effectual devotion was compatible with the ordinary duties of the world. But these good and able men appear to have been so impressed with the nothingness of this life, that they deemed the amelioration of man's social condition unworthy of a thought. They perfected forms of dissent rather than planted the germs of nations, and their sects remain to this day as they left them. It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality." ¹ This passage has so frequently been quoted by subsequent writers,² who, in our opinion, have accepted its propositions rather carelessly, that it is necessary to submit it to a close

¹ Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs* (Garrett's Edition), p. 38.

² Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 8; Teja Singh, *Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism* (Third Edition), p. iii.

examination. It seems that Cunningham's first contention is that the other reformers had no programme of social amelioration. But later on he himself says about Nanak that "it is neither probable, nor is it necessary to suppose, that he possessed any clear and sagacious views of social amelioration or of political advancement. He left the progress of his people to the operation of time."¹ The absence of a social programme cannot therefore be said to have constituted much difference. Indeed, it cannot be too strongly insisted that the method of these teachers were entirely different from those of the so-called social reformers of our days. They were concerned, more or less, with fundamentals, knowing fully well that, once these were accepted, society would be compelled to readjust itself.

In the second place, Cunningham's statement that the other reformers were thoroughly impressed by the nothingness of the world seems to have developed in the hands of later writers into the belief that another great distinguishing mark of Sikhism lay in its reconciliation with secular life.² Indeed, one recent writer has gone to the extent of saying that "so strongly were they impressed by the nothingness of this world, that they advocated total renunciation."³ There is, however, no evidence to support such a position and it seems to us that the whole thing has been misunderstood. It is no doubt true that the hymns of Kabir or the writings of the followers of Chaitanya frequently

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

² Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³ Kartar Singh, *Life of Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 5.

give the impression that their message was of an other-worldly character but such ideas can be found in plenty in Guru Nanak's hymns as well. This is as it should be and must not be allowed to cloud the issue. That the religion of Chaitanya was not in any way inconsistent with secular life is proved beyond doubt by the fact that Nityananda, who had been a *sannyāsī* from his very boyhood and who had been the principal instrument in the propagation of Chaitanya's message, married late in life and settled as a householder,¹ and the numerical strength of the lay votaries of most of these sects unmistakably shows that the position of these later writers is wholly untenable. It is one thing not to prohibit renunciation and quite another to advocate renunciation and the fact of the matter seems to be that this distinction has not been kept in view. The only difference between Sikhism and the other sects in this respect arose under the successors of Nanak when the door to renunciation was barred and Sikhism became essentially a religion of householders. And possibly Guru Nanak himself prepared the way for this when he refused to nominate his eldest son; Sri Chand, as his successor because of the other-worldliness of his character.

It has also been claimed that another great peculiarity of Sikhism was its non-sectarian character.² Cunnigham says, "instead of the circumscribed divinity, the anthropomorphous God of Ramanand and Kabir, Nanak loftily invokes the Lord as the one, the sole,

¹ D. C. Sen, *Chaitanya and His Companions*, p. 46.

² Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

the timeless being.”¹ It is undoubtedly true that one of the greatest merits of Nanak’s teaching was that he sought to strip religion of mythology and history, but the same may possibly be said about Kabir as well and it is certainly unfair to the latter to say that his God was anthropomorphous. This view arises primarily from the fact that Kabir called his God by the name of Rām. But this by itself proves nothing, as we find that the Sikh Gurus also very often use the same word to denote the Supreme Being. We venture to hope that anybody who reads carefully the hymns of Kabir cannot but realise that his Rām was something not much different from the Rām of the Sikh Gurus. His followers, no doubt, fell off from his ideal and admitted most of the personifications of Hinduism but it cannot possibly be denied that Kabir himself adhered strictly to his explicit profession of monotheism. Most of the other sects, however, could not rid themselves of, or soon reverted to, mythology and tradition, and thus it appears that Sikhism stood distinguished from the sectarian schools in general by the simplicity and spiritualistic character of its worship and especially by its moderation in regard to mythology.² This comparative freedom from the shackles of tradition undoubtedly made it more mobile and more at liberty to readjust itself as circumstances required.

But these differences which we have been able to trace so far hardly justify Cunningham’s remark that the other reformers merely perfected forms of dissent whereas Guru Nanak alone planted the germs of a

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

² Barth, *The Religions of India*, p. 243.

nation. The point is somewhat involved and it is necessary to have it absolutely clear. It goes without saying that the future Sikh nation grew on the foundation provided by Nanak and it is thus clear that he had planted the germs of a nation. But Cunningham's contention seems to be that the system of Nanak had some such original distinctiveness which alone could provide the basis of a nation and which was wholly absent in the other reform movements. Such a position, however, seems hardly tenable.

Some later writers have gone further and they would have us believe that the full-fledged Sikh nation of the future had already been contemplated by Guru Nanak and that his successors merely turned that contemplation into a reality. The only evidence that these writers adduce to show that Guru Nanak had political ideals is some of his hymns wherein he deplores the barbarities practised by Babur's soldiers in connection with the capture of Sayyidpur and the inhumanities perpetrated by the Muhammadan rulers of the day. It is said that the Guru's heart melted at the spectacle but he was helpless as he had no nation at his back. "He and his successors had to create it. But he did not sit down in impotent rage and utter idle jeremiads. Being a practical man, he set about doing as much as the circumstances would permit." ¹ But all these are pure

¹ Teja Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 4; see also Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 6, f. n.

Teja Singh's view is that Nanak deliberately set himself to the task of creating a nation and that under his successors "a whole nation was on the anvil, and all the teaching and action was designed to contribute

assumptions and hardly require any refutation. 'The plain fact is that a man of Guru Nanak's temperament and character could not but be deeply struck by such brutalities and he gave vent to his feelings in his characteristic manner. These instances show how difficult it has become to study the history of the earlier phases of Sikhism in their true historical setting and perspective and how the later political and military successes of Sikhism have added largely to the difficulties of the student. Since Browne wrote his *India Tracts* many have been the writers who have sought to enrich Sikh studies one way or another but it cannot possibly be denied that most of the writings on the earlier phases of Sikhism have been coloured, more or less, by the reflected glory of its later days.

Whatever that might be, it appears that Sikhism started with a certain plasticity of character and it is also probable that "though he did not make it the subject of a formal prohibition, Nanak had dissuaded his disciples from renouncing active life." But these features were, by no means, entirely unique and could not by themselves have meant much. Guru Nanak, however, nominated a successor just before his death and this was, no doubt a measure of far-reaching consequences. The significance of this memorable step has been fully discussed in its proper place and without anticipating matters it would be enough to say

to the making of its character (p. 2)." He proceeds, to show how each successive Guru contributed some essential trait till at last under Guru Gobind Singh the full-fledged nation came into being. But such a view of the matter, "postulating for Sikhism a deliberate and more or less conscious development, suffers from over-simplification and can hardly be regarded as historical.

that it gave Sikhism a definite leadership which could not but be of supreme importance in the history of its evolution. The Guruship came to acquire in Sikhism a meaning quite its own and the predominant personality of the Guru supplied a nucleus around which the Sikh *Panth* could gradually arise. Nanak's successors effected a separation between the Sikhs and the *Udāsīs*, or the followers of Sri Chand and Sikhism became essentially a religion of householders. It was given something of a 'social character in addition to the religious ties that held it together' and a temporal character was added to the Guruship, faint and indirect though it no doubt was. Moreover, under the wise guidance of the successors of Guru Nanak Sikhism developed that unique spirit of organisation that made it so definite in its practical results. The compilation of the *Granth Sāhib* completed the separation from mythology and tradition and by the time of Guru Arjan Sikhism had come to acquire, primarily through its *Sangats* and *Masands*, a far-flung and, at the same time, a centralised organisation. And the strength of that organisation, together with the high intensity of the religious ideals of Sikhism, gives us the measure of its reaction to Muslim persecution.

That reaction expressed itself in a sudden transition to militarism, but the militarism, in the first instance, was of a purely defensive character. "Arjan had seen clearly that it was impossible to preserve the followers without the aid of arms; and his last injunction to his son and successor, Hargovind, was to sit fully armed on his throne and maintain the largest military force he could muster." The tolerant days of Akbar were no

more and the first bitter experience which the Sikhs had had at the very beginning of the new regime must have convinced them that harder days were ahead. It was mainly as a precaution against future contingencies rather than with any idea of revenge that Guru Hargobind took to arms. His career seems to show that he was careful to avoid, as far as practicable, any conflict with the State and, for a time at least, he was friendly with the Emperor Jahangir and even assisted the Mughal administration in the Punjab. His three battles against the Mughals were all of a defensive character and except in the second case, where we have a very dubious story of his having forcibly rescued two horses from the Emperor's stable at Lahore, none of these was of his own seeking. And when he found the odds all too heavy he retired to the hills and lived in retirement till his death.

It is not difficult to see that in the circumstances, when the Mughal Empire was in the heyday of its glory, a more vigorous line of action was out of the question and the successors of Guru Hargobind were careful to pursue the same policy and avoid quarrels with the Government, though it must be said to their infinite credit that they never allowed the question of safety to get the better of duty and justice. Har Rai, who succeeded Guru Hargobind, continued to live in the hills and though as a precautionary measure he maintained an army about 2,000 strong and his court displayed 'the pomp and magnificence of a semi-independent military chieftain,' he devoted himself almost solely to the peaceful organisation of his followers. But, for once at least, he did not hesitate to

give up his peaceful policy at the call of friendship and the demands of hospitality. He is said to have helped Dara Sukoh when the latter fled to the Punjab after his defeat at the hands of Aurangzib. A period of stress and difficulty immediately ensued and when after the death of the boy-Guru Har Krishan, Tegh Bahadur came to be recognised as the legitimate Guru, he retired further into the hills and settled at Makhowal in the hill state of Kahlur. But owing to the undisguised hostility of the disgruntled Ram Rai, who had never ceased to conspire against the legitimate Gurus since his father nominated his younger brother Har Krishan to the Guruship in preference to him, and of other Sodhi Khatris, notably Dhir Mal, the elder brother of Guru Har Rai, Tegh Bahadur found his position insecure even at Makhowal and, for a time, went out on travels. On his return to the Punjab, however, he found it impossible to stand by when he found how the proselytising zeal of the Emperor was working havoc among the peaceful Hindu population. His lofty religious ideals compelled him to throw all caution to the winds and he openly espoused the cause of the Brahmans of Kashmir against the Emperor. And for this he was taken to Delhi and publicly executed.

The reaction was tremendous. The Sikhs realised that the Emperor's avowed policy of religious persecution was threatening them with extinction root and branch, and that the limited militarism of the days of Guru Hargobind no longer sufficed. In other directions as well the situation had changed. The Emperor had alienated the Rajputs and his long and arduous quarrel

with the Marathas soon began to undermine his resources. In the midst of these preoccupations of the Mughals a more vigorous policy had much greater chances of success and Sikhism was fortunate in having at this juncture a great leader of vision and courage who could restate it in terms of the changed environment. And the Khalsa or the Sikh military theocracy came into being.

The foregoing review gives us, in bare outline, the main stages in the evolution of the Khalsa and some idea as to the forces, internal and external, that conditioned the development. A very important consideration, however, has been left out. It is, more or less, an admitted fact of history that religious systems undergo modifications as they pass from people to people or from country to country, and it cannot possibly be denied that these variations are primarily to be attributed to racial and environmental causes. Speaking of Buddhism in Japan, Bertrand Russel says, "What the Japanese made of Buddhism reminds one in many ways of what the Teutonic nations made of Christianity. Buddhism and Christianity, originally, were very similar in spirit. They were both religions aiming at the achievement of holiness by renunciation of the world. They both ignored politics and government and wealth, for which they substituted the future life as what was of real importance. They were both religions of peace, teaching gentleness and non-resistance. But both had to undergo great transformations in adapting themselves to the instincts of warlike barbarians. In Japan, a multitude of sects arose, teaching doctrines which differed in many ways from

Mahāyāna orthodoxy. Buddhism became national and militaristic ; the abbots of great monasteries became important feudal chieftains, whose monks constituted an army which was ready to fight on the slightest provocation. Sieges of monasteries and battles with monks are of constant occurrence in Japanese history.”¹ And as Rhys Davids says, in the making of Mahayana Buddhism itself the national character of the Scythians and Kushan Tartars was no negligible factor.²

The history of Islam in Persia affords another striking illustration of the phenomenon in question. As Sir William Muir says, “ With the rise of Persian influence the roughness of Arab life was softened ; and there opened an era of culture, toleration and scientific research.....To the same source may be attributed the ever-increasing laxity at Court of manners and morality ; and also those transcendental views that now sprang up of the divine Imāmat or spiritual leadership of some member of the house of ‘Ali as well as the rapid growth of free thought.”³ The reaction was thus widespread and made itself felt in a variety of ways but it was possibly most striking in the field of religion. Opinions differ as to the nature and extent of Persian influences on such developments as the Mutazila heresy with its doctrine of free will and its rejection of the orthodox view that ‘the Koran is uncreate,’ or the idealistic and pantheistic mysticism of the Sufis, but at the same time there can be little doubt that there

¹ Bertrand Russel, *The Problem of China*, pp. 91, 92.

² Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 320.

³ Sir William Muir, *The Caliphate, Rise, Decline and Fall*, p. 434.

arose many outward Muhammadan heresies that embodied and revived in new forms pre-Muslim and non-Muslim ideas. And most of the ultra-Shi'ite sects "do but reassert the same essential doctrines of Anthropomorphism, Incarnation, Re-incarnation or Return and Metempsychosis, which doctrines appear to be endemic in Persia, and always ready to become epidemic under a suitable stimulus. In our own days they appeared again in the Babi movement, of which, specially in its earlier form, they constituted the essential kernel." ¹ Whether in all these or in some at least we can detect 'the reaction of the Aryan mind against a Semitic religion imposed upon it by force' is difficult to say and must be left to experts.

This question of 'race and religion,' however, has of late received some attention in psychological and socio-anthropological studies and attempts have been made at a scientific and precise statement of the processes involved. McDougall says, "We may in fact regard each distinctive type of civilisation as a species, evolved largely by selection, and the selective agency, which corresponds to and plays a part analogous to the part of the physical environment of an animal species, is the innate mental constitution of the people." He then goes on to suggest that 'these principles are illustrated, perhaps, most clearly by the spread and modification of religious systems among peoples of different races' and as an example of modification he takes the distribution of the two great divisions of the

Christian religion in Western Europe. We are told that among all the disputes and uncertainties of the ethnographers about the races of Europe it is possible to distinguish a race of northerly distribution and origin, characterised physically by fair colour of hair and skin and eyes and mentally by great independence of character, individual initiative, and tenacity of will. This is known as the *Homo Europæus* or the Nordic type. The rest of the population of Europe, with certain exceptions in the extreme north and east, are chiefly derived from two stocks, the *Homo Alpinus* which occupies chiefly the central regions, and the *Homo Mediterraneus* in the south. Both are of dark complexion and mentally they differ from the Nordic type in having less independence and initiative and a greater tendency to rely on authority. "Now we find that the distribution of the Protestant variety of Christianity coincides very nearly with the regions in which the fair type predominates ; while in all other regions the Roman Catholic or Greek orthodox churches hold undisputed sway. North and South Germany illustrate the point. And Motley's account of the Netherlands shows how closely the line between Protestant Holland and Roman Catholic Belgium coincides with the line of racial division." McDougall concludes, "It would be absurd to hold that this coincidence is fortuitous. It is clearly due to the assimilation of the form of the religious and ecclesiastical system to the innate tendencies of the people. The northern peoples have given the system a turn compatible with the independence of spirit which is their leading racial quality ; the peoples among whom the

other racial elements predominate have developed' and maintained a religion of authority.'" ¹

But such an 'over-simplification of extremely complex matters' could hardly be acceptable and, as Hankins says, 'this interesting speculation could never advance beyond a hypothetical probability, although it won't the adherence of various writers.' In the first place, 'any final solution of the racial history of Europe is as yet impossible, but so far as authentic data exist they warrant the view that all simplistic solutions are delusions; secondly, the so-called 'innate tendencies of a people' is a very complex affair and though the rôle of race as a factor in cultural evolution is certainly to be admitted, 'every thoroughly scientific student of the matter must confess that we have not yet devised a technique of investigation which can isolate the relative weight of the hereditary traits and the social conjuncture in the evolution of a given culture.' ²

¹ William McDougall, *The Group Mind*, pp. 113-115.

This theory of a close correspondence between race and religion is as old as the eighties of the last century when Carl Penka is said to have formulated it in his works on the origins of the Aryans. It was then advanced in connection with the so-called Aryanism and have since never ceased to find acceptance particularly among the Nordacists. (See Hankins, *The Racial Basis of Civilisation*, pp. 56, 57.)

² Hankins, *ibid*, p. 236. See also pp. 233-34. Hankins says, 'these allegations were extensively discussed a generation ago and rejected after careful analysis by painstaking anthropologists and social statisticians.' It is really the question of heredity, *vs.* environment of the evolutionists, of Weismannism *vs.* Lamarckism, transferred to the realm of socio-anthropology. For our purposes, however, it does not make much difference if both factors are essential though it may be that 'environment is clearly more important for some things and heredity for others.'

Leaving aside these technical discussions, which are clearly beyond our province, and taking a middle path between the so-called Nordicists on the one hand and the race egalitarianists on the other, we may yet say broadly, that the innate characteristics of a people are a very important factor in the modification of religious systems. We have already seen how certain phases of the history of Buddhism and Christianity, as well as that of Islam, afford striking illustrations of the fact in question and it seems that the history of Vaishnavism provides another example, though, perhaps, of a more limited character. Raja-gopala Chariar observes, "In the North, Vaishnavism first affected the lower strata of society and proceeded upwards in its conversions. In Bengal, Sāktāism had taken deep root among the Brahmins..... In Benares and Western India the Brahmins were gradually enlightened Advaites to whom the cult of devotion had no attractions. Hence the first converts to Vaishnavism were the lower castes. It was, therefore, inevitable that the habits and customs of the converts should react on the religion newly adopted and present phases of it which are alike strange and inexplicable to the earlier adherents of the same faith in the South."¹ Though it may be doubtful as to whether Vaishnavism in the North proceeded, in all cases, upwards in its conversions, it cannot be denied that here it was more popular and widespread and thus amenable to reactions, which were, more or less, absent in the South.

Such instances can be multiplied but we think that enough has been said to show that in this view of the

¹ T. Rajagopala Chariar, *Vaishnavite Reformers of India*, p. 143.

matter we have a line of approach which cannot be entirely ignored. It should also be noted that, besides what we may call the racio-cultural complex, 'climate and terrain have also a marked influence on the form religion takes in its human manifestation.' Wayman Bury gives several very interesting examples of this phenomenon from the history of Christianity in Egypt and Arabia. "The marked cleavage of hermit-like asceticism and gross sensuality which rock-bound deserts and the lush Nile valley wrought in Egyptian Christendom has been described by every writer dealing with that subject, and Arabian Christianity drooped and finally died in the arid pastoral uplands of Jaufr and Nejran long before it succumbed in fertile, hard-working Yamen."¹ We are further told that Islam derived its austere and sensual features from the fact that it was a religion of desert and oasis² and we may add that the different forms that Vaishnavism assumed in different provinces of India were probably due, partly at least, to geographical factors, but here again it is important to remember that it is impossible to isolate one factor from another, though the broad fact itself is not likely to be disputed.

Coming back to Sikhism we find that, like the Vaishnavism of Northern India Sikhism, too, had its converts primarily from the lower classes. Sir George Campbell remarks, 'it is curious that, intimately connected as the Khatri always have been and still are with the Sikh religion, only 9 per cent. of them should belong to it,' and 'a Khatri when a Sikh, is ordinarily

¹ Wayman Bury, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

² *Ibid.*

a Sikh of Nanak, rather than a devotee of Guru Govind.' ¹ The truth seems to be that the democratic ideas inculcated by Sikhism could not but make it unpopular with the higher classes who valued their 'pride of birth' above everything else and necessarily Sikhism had to fall almost solely upon the Jats for swelling its ranks. Guru Arjan is said to have converted almost the entire Jat peasantry of the Manjha tract and there can be little doubt that by the time of Guru Hargobind the Jats formed by far the preponderant element in the Sikh community. Like the Vaishnavism of Northern India Sikhism also could not escape a similar reaction and the character of the Jats imperceptibly modified the system, as it was bound to do. It seems to us that the correspondence between certain preponderant traits in the Jat character and some of the later developments associated with the Khalsa are remarkably close and that the transformation of Sikhism thus affords a more or less striking example of 'the assimilation of the form of the religious system to the innate tendencies of the people.' But at the same time it is important to remember that we are dealing with a very complex affair and we should take guard against any tendency towards over-simplification lest we perpetrate what has been called 'the fraud of history made easy.'

¹ *Glossary of the Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, p. 507.

CHAPTER II

THE AGE OF GURU NANAK

Guru Nanak was born at Talwandi in the district of Lahore in 1469 when Bahlol Lodi was reigning at Delhi, he saw the subversion of the Lodi dynasty at Panipat by Babur in 1526, and he died in 1538 just on the eve of that temporary eclipse of Mughal authority before it was finally re-established on a surer foundation. Guru Nanak thus lived and worked in an age of transition when Northern India was moving towards a new re-adjustment and the old Sultanate of Delhi was making way for a new imperialism of a somewhat more enlightened character. It was necessarily an age of disintegration, the central authority was weak and the centrifugal tendencies were, more or less, paramount. The Lodis, no doubt, had effected a considerable improvement in the situation and the almost total anarchy of the Sayyad days was a thing of the past, but the authority of the Sultan still rested on precarious foundations as the Afghan nobles "were accustomed to regard the prince, as their chief, not as their master—as the representative of the national force, raised to power and maintained in it by their support." ¹ The unsatisfactory character of the Sultan's authority became clear when Ibrahim Lodi attempted to define the claims of his prerogative more rigidly and was met

¹ Erskine, *History of India under Babar and Humayun* Vol. I, p. 411.

with open opposition. As Erskine points out, the Lodi possessions, though extensive, had no very strong principle of cohesion. "The monarchy was a congeries of nearly independent principalities, jagirs and provinces, each ruled by a hereditary chief, or by a zeminder or delegate from Delhi ; and the inhabitants looked more to their immediate governors, who had absolute power in the province, and in whose hands, consequently, lay their happiness and misery, than to a distant and little known sovereign."

This unsatisfactory state of affairs was due primarily to the "appalling atrocities" of Timur's invasion. Since the death of Firoz Tughlak the Sultanate of Delhi had been gradually decaying in prestige and power. The provinces were falling off one after another and at the capital the later Tughlaks, who were, without exception, weak, incompetent and inexperienced, found themselves helpless amidst the machinations of rival factions and unscrupulous chiefs. The weakness of the Government and the proverbial opulence of Hindusthan must have been enough to fire the cupidity of Timur, who was a man of insatiable ambition and had great confidence in his own tested strength, but the wanton violence of his horrible raid can never be fully realised if we forget that neither conquest nor plunder was the principal object of his expedition.² The destruction of the infidels, their idols and temples was Timur's primary aim and his fanatical policy was carried out with a ruthlessness

¹ Erskine, *op. cit.*, p. 406.

² Ishwari Prasad, *Mediaeval India*, p. 291.

which has led some to characterise him as a monster in human form.¹

After the departure of Timur "all semblance of Government was destroyed in Upper India" and the extent to which the Punjab suffered during the prevailing anarchy may be gauged from the fact that when Mubarak Shah, the second Sayyad monarch, entered Lahore in 1421 he found the city in ruins, "in which no living thing except the owl of ill omen had its abode."² This Sayyad monarch appears to have been a man of some ability but the circumstances were against him and he failed totally to stem the tide of disruption. Besides the Mewatis, who held the tract between Delhi and Agra, and the Hindu Zemindars of Kateher and the Doab, the Turkbachas of Sarhind kept up a continuous opposition and the situation in the Punjab was made hopeless by the constant intrigues of rival governors, the machinations and adventures of Jasrath Khokar and the raids of Shaik Ali of Kabul. This Jasrath Khokar, whom Yahya bin Ahmed calls "an impudent rustic,"³ had his headquarters in the hills at Tekhar and as soon as the news of the death of Khizir Khan reached the Punjab, he crossed the Beas and the Sutlej, plundered the country from the town of Ludhiana to Rupar and marched towards Jalandhar. "Intoxicated with

¹ Dr. Sachau calls him a monster and Prof. Dawson agrees. Elliott, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. FV, p. 560.

² Elliott, *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 56. This is no doubt an exaggeration but the extent of the exaggeration gives some measure of the truth.

³ *Ibid*, p. 54.

victory and elated with the strength of his forces, he began to have visions about Delhi." His designs failed in the end but his intrigues and adventures made the Punjab a hotbed of endless strife. Again and again he descended from his hill retreat, now attacking Jalandhar and now investing Lahore, time and again harrying the open country and carrying the peaceful inhabitants away as prisoners, and he continued in this manner till Bahlol Lodi ascended the throne.

On the other hand, " Shaik Ali, the lieutenant of the prince, the son of Sar 'atmash " ¹ invaded the province and for some time his raid became almost an annual affair. The local authorities were so very impotent that Malik Sikandar, the Governor of Lahore, gave Shaik Ali two thousand rupees annually to keep him off. The continued rebellion of Pulad, the Turkbacha leader of Sarhind, who invited Shaik Ali more than once to his assistance, strengthened the hands of the invader and he seems to have met with little effective opposition in his deliberate game of harrying and plundering. His methods were so ruthless that even the Muhammadan historian of the period is constrained to call him an infidel. At Tulamba " he gave his accursed followers permission to take possession of the fort. Next day, all the Mussalmans became the prisoners of the unclean ruthless infidels. Although many good men of the place were *imams*, *Saiyids* and *Kazis*, no respect for the

Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 59. Firishta says that he was a Mughal chieftain in the service of Sharokh Mirza, Governor of Kabul; Briggs, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*, Vol. I (R. Cambray, 1908), p. 517.

Mussalman religion, no fear of God, could restrain that accursed wretch, devoid alike of feeling and shame. Women, youths and little children were all dragged to his house.”¹ On another occasion at Lahore “the accursed Shaik Ali made all the Mussalmans of the city, both men and women, prisoners. This wretched graceless fellow had no better object or occupation than to lay waste the seats of Islam and to make Mussalmans captive.”² If such had been the fate of the Mussalmans, what the Hindus suffered at his hands can easily be guessed. Firishta says that on one occasion, after having received two lakhs of tunkas from Pulad, the Turkbacha leader, for the service he rendered in compelling the royal army to abandon the siege of Sarhind, Shaik Ali recrossed the Sutlej and realised by plunder ‘one hundred-fold beyond the value of what he had received from Pulad.’ He continued his depredations in the districts of Lahore and Depalpur ‘insomuch that 40,000 Hindus were computed to have been massacred, besides a great number carried away prisoners.’ Even making due allowance for possible exaggeration it is not difficult to realise the extreme wretchedness of the plight in which the inhabitants of the Punjab found themselves during the so-called Sayyad regime.

With the assassination of Mubarak Shah the little vigour that still characterised the Sultanate of Delhi disappeared and under his successor ‘the business of the state day by day fell into greater confusion, and affairs came to such a pass that there were *amirs* at

¹ *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 73.

² *Ibid*, p. 76.

twenty *kos* from Delhi who shook off their allegiance, and made pretensions to independence.' In 1441 the Sultan had conferred the country of Depalpur and Lahore on Bahlol Khan and sent him against Jasrath Khokar, ' who made peace with him and flattered him with hopes of the throne of Delhi.' Bahlol now virtually made himself independent of Delhi and calling together the Afghans from all directions organised a strong party. His first attempt failed but with the accession of Alauddin the Sayyad power was weakened still further and finally in 1451 Bahlol Khan Lodi seized Delhi and declared himself Sultan.

The situation immediately improved. Bahlol succeeded in subduing the eastern kingdom of Jaunpur, which had always been a thorn on the side of the Sayyads and " he may be said to have recovered a certain amount of control extending from the foot of the mountains to Benares and as far south as the borders of Bundelkhand." ¹ But as we have said before, the Lodis could only stem but not turn the tide of disruption. Under Bahlol and his successors the Afghans of the Lodi, Fermuli and Lohana tribes naturally held the principal jagirs and chief offices of trust, ' which, from the habitual modes of thinking of their race, they considered as their own of right, and purchased by their swords, rather than as due to any bounty or liberality on the part of the sovereign.' Bahlol Khan Lodi was too clever a man not to realise the situation and he was tactful and sagacious enough to adopt a policy that kept the Afghan nobles friendly and, more or less, attached to himself. He is said to have

¹ Vincent Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 253.

maintained a brotherly intercourse with all chiefs and soldiers. "In his social meetings he never sat on a throne and would not allow his nobles to stand; and even during public audiences he did not occupy the throne, but seated himself on a carpet."¹ This ingenious policy of disengaging the suspicion and jealousy of the Afghan nobles was eminently successful. It is remarkable that inspite of the traditional impatience of the Afghans of a controlling authority and Bahlol Khan's own preoccupation with the King of Jaunpur for a number of years, the Afghan nobles gave him very little trouble save some minor disturbances, here and there.

Sikandar Lodi, the son and successor of Bahlol, began well and he even extended his kingdom by annexing Behar, the last of the Shurki possessions, in the east, and Dholpur, Chanderi and Gwalior in the west. But he failed to manage the Afghan nobles and governors as successfully as his father had done. "The Afghan nobles chafed and fidgetted under the restraints that had to be imposed upon them in the interests of good government, and it was with great difficulty that Sikandar was able to hold in check their turbulent and factious spirit." This was clearly illustrated in the attempted rebellion of several Afghan chiefs, who wanted to place Prince Futeh Khan, the Sultan's brother, on the throne when Sikandar attempted to interfere too closely with them. The attempt fizzled out but the tendency to revolt was so common that the Sultan found it impossible to secure the

¹ *Tarikh-i-Daudi*, Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 430-37.

permanent loyalty of his Muslim vassals, to say nothing of the Hindu chiefs ' and the last years of Sikandar were spent in suppressing ' Rajput revolts and the infructuous attempts at independence made by his own governors.'

The precarious foundation on which the Lodi kingdom rested is thus evident. But we have not seen the whole of it yet. Sikandar Lodi completely alienated the sympathies of the Hindus, who formed by far the majority of his subjects, by his fierce religious persecution. Of Sikandar's love of justice the Muhammadan historians are full of unqualified praise. " Sikandar never omitted to devote a certain time to hear complaints in public, and he has been frequently known to sit at business the whole day long, even after his appointed time for meals and rest." ¹ The author of the *Tarikh-i-Daudi* gives him a very high character. " Sultan Sikandar was a most illustrious monarch and of a benevolent disposition ; he was famous for his liberality, honour and politeness ; he had no affection for pomp and ceremonies and cared not for processions and magnificent dresses. No one who was a profligate and a bad character had access to him ; he always associated with men of religion and the virtuous, and was both inwardly pious and outwardly handsome ; he did not give way to his desires, and was exceedingly God-fearing and benevolent to the people. He was very just and courageous, his equity beheld the weak and the strong' with the same eye, and he was constantly employed in balancing evidence, deciding suits,

arranging the affairs of the Empire, and trying to render his subjects happy ; he personally assisted the wretched.”¹ But Sikandar’s benevolence and sense of justice had very serious limitations. They stopped short with a section of his subjects, his own co-religionists. Under him “ the State once more assumed a theocratic character and officially imposed Islam upon the Hindus,” so that in spite of what the Muhammadan writers say about Sikandar’s justice, we need not be surprised at Guru Nanak’s complaint that in his age “ Justice hath taken wings and fled.”² The Guru in one place directly refers to the practice of bribery that tainted the administration. We are told :

‘ Compassion is not exercised by merely beholding a suitor,
There is no one who receiveth or giveth not bribes,
The king dispenseth justice when his palm is filled.’³

And Bhai Gurdas also speaks of the almost universal vice of bribe-taking of which very few of the Kazis were free.⁴ But apart from these considerations, the fierce bigotry of Sikandar Lodi makes all talk of his sense of justice a cruel mockery.

Even before his accession, Prince Nizam Khan, as Sikandar was then called, had given unmistakable proof of his blind intolerance. It is related by the author of the *Tarikh-i-Daudi* that on one occasion “ when a crowd of Hindus had assembled in immense numbers at Kurkhet, he wished to go to Thanesor for

¹ Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 445.

² Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. 170.

³ *Ibid*, p. 5

⁴ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 30.

the purpose of putting them all to death." Even when Miah Abdulla, the Maliku-l Ulma, assured the prince, that it would be very improper to destroy an ancient idol temple and that he ought not to forbid the accustomed rite of performing ablutions in the tank, as the custom was very ancient and had been left unmolested by the previous Muhammadan sovereigns, it was with difficulty that the Prince could be dissuaded from his intended project. He placed his hand on his dagger and exclaimed, " You side with the infidels. I will first put an end to you, and then massacre the infidels at Kurkhet." Unperturbed the Mian replied that he had given an answer in conformity with the precepts of the Prophet and if the Prince had no reverence for them, it was useless to ask questions like these. At last the Prince's wrath was appeased and the project was given up.¹ It can easily be seen what the Hindus might expect when such a prince wielded the sceptre of the realm and many illustrations are available to prove that throughout his reign one of the most cherished aims of Sikandar Lodi was the extirpation of Hinduism.

Firishta says that " Sikandar was firmly attached to the Muhammadan religion, and made a point of destroying all Hindu temples," ² and we read in the *Tarikh-i-Daudi* that " he was so zealous a Mussalman that he utterly destroyed diverse places of worship of the infidels, and left not a vestige remaining of them... Every city thus conformed as he desired to the customs

¹ *Tarikh-i-Daudi*, Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 439, 440 ; see also Briggs, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 587.

² Briggs, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 586.

of Islam.”¹ In 1504 Sikandar captured Mundril. The Hindu temples in the place were immediately destroyed and mosques were built in their stead.² In 1506 Hanumantgarh was captured, the Rajput garrison was put to the sword and the Hindu temples shared the same fate as at Mundril.³ In the same year Sikandar marched against Nurwar, a strong fort in the district of Malwa, then in possession of the Hindus. After the capitulation of the garrison the Sultan remained at the place for six months, ‘breaking down temples and building mosques. He also established a college there, and placed therein many holy and learned men.’⁴ But the greatest havoc that was wrought by the Sultan’s fanaticism was in the ancient Hindu city of Mathura. The celebrated temples of Mathura were all destroyed and the Hindu places of worship were turned into caravanserais and colleges. Mosques and bazars were built opposite the bathing-stairs leading to the river and the Sultan ordered that no Hindu should be allowed to bathe there. “Their stone images were given to the butchers to serve them as meat-weights, and all the Hindus in Mathura were strictly prohibited from shaving their heads and beards, and performing their ablutions.....and no Hindu, if he wished to have his head or beard shaved, could get a barber to do it.”⁵

But even these atrocities seem mild and moderate in comparison with the execution of the Brahman

¹ Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 447.

² Briggs, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 578.

³ *Ibid*, p. 580.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 581.

⁵ *Tarikh-i-Daudi*, Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 447. See also Briggs, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 586.

Budhan. The sole offence of the Brahman was that he had declared in the presence of some Muhammadans that 'the religions of both the Moslems and Hindus, if acted on with sincerity, were equally acceptable to God.' Two of the local Kazis 'gave fatwas which did not coincide respecting the merits of the case' and consequently the matter was referred to the Sultan who caused all the wise men of note to assemble. The Brahman and the two Kazis were also brought in and after some disputation the Ulama determined that the Brahman should either embrace Islam or suffer execution. He refused to apostatise and was consequently put to death.¹ If this was justice, Guru Nanak might very well say that 'Justice hath taken wings and fled.' After this incident it is needless to refer to the case of Ahmed Khan, the Governor of Lucknow. It is said that this man had become a convert to the Hindu doctrines and that as soon as the Sultan heard of this he ordered that Ahmed Khan should immediately be relieved of his government and sent a prisoner to court.²

¹ Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 464, 465; Briggs, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 576, 577. The *Tarikh-i-Daudi* says that the name of the Brahman was Laudhan, who dwelt in the village of Kaner. Kazi Piyara and Shaikh Badr, who resided at Lakhnauti, gave fatwas. Azam Humayun, the governor of the district, sent them to the Sultan's court. Firishta says that the name of the Brahman was Budhan and he was an inhabitant of Kataen, near Lucknow. See also, Ishwari Prasad, *Medieval India*, p. 482.

² Briggs, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 582. There may be something in the suggestion that the Brahman Budhan belonged to the school of Kabir and in that case his incident might very well be the foundation of the story of Sikandar's meeting with Kabir, which involves an obvious anachronism. The case of the Lucknow Governor may also perhaps be attributed to the same influence.

The Hindus had, therefore, no cause for gratification at the restoration of order by the Lodi sovereigns. The 'peace and security' which they now, to some extent, enjoyed was more than counterbalanced by the fierce religious persecution to which they were subjected. But, as we have seen, the sovereignty of the Lodis was based on very weak foundations and on Ibrahim's accession the situation immediately became worse. Ibrahim lacked that tact which had enabled his father and grandfather to keep the greedy and factious Afghan nobles, more or less, in check. The first two Lodis were content to enjoy the reality of power without caring too much to limit its claim to definition but Ibrahim was a man of a different mould. "At a very early period, contrary to the custom of his father and grandfather, he made no distinction among his officers, whether of his own tribe or otherwise, and said publicly, that kings should have no relations nor clansmen, but that all should be considered as subjects and servants of the State; and the Afghan chiefs, who had hitherto been allowed to sit in the presence, were constrained to stand in front of the throne, with their hands crossed before them."¹ The result was soon perceptible in the conspiracy of a group of Afghan nobles to set up Prince Jalal Khan, a brother of Ibrahim, in independent possession of Jaunpur. The conspiracy was crushed but the Afghan nobles were alienated for ever, and the rest of Ibrahim's reign was, more or less, occupied in subduing successive rebellions in different parts of his kingdom. The Sultan soon made himself

¹ Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

an object of almost universal distrust and the climax was reached when Daulat Khan Lodi, the Governor of Lahore, invited Babur to invade Hindusthan and place himself on the throne of Delhi.

Even before this Babur had led several expeditions into the Punjab. Babur says in his *Memoirs* that ever since he came to Kabul it had been his intention to move on Hindusthan but a variety of reasons had hitherto prevented him from carrying out his plan.¹ However, in 1519 he found his hands sufficiently free to make a sudden move towards Bhira, 'the borderland of Hindusthan.' The tract was then in the possession of Ali Khan, the son of Daulat Khan Lodi. Babur's object seems to have been to take possession of the country, if possible by peaceful means, and an order was accordingly issued to his soldiers to the following effect:—"Do no hurt or harm to the flocks and herds of these people, nor even to their cotton ends and broken needles."² A sum of 400,000 *shahrukhis* was agreed on as the price of peace and collectors were appointed to realise the amount. When the news was brought to Babur that "the soldiery were behaving without sense and were laying hands on Bhira people, persons were sent who caused some of those senseless people to meet their death-doom, of others slit the noses and so led them round the camp."³ On this occasion Babur also sent an envoy to the Afghan Court 'asking for the countries which from of old had

¹ *Memoirs of Babur*, Beveridge's Translation, sec. II, p. 377.

² *Ibid*, p. 380.

³ *Ibid*, p. 383. 400,000 *shahrukhis*, nearly 20,000 sterling. Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 233, f. n. 2.

depended on the Turk.' But the envoy was detained by Daulat Khan at Lahore and returned unsuccessful. Nor did Babur remain long in Hindusthan. After having subdued a Kahar chief he made some arrangements for holding Bhira and the adjoining districts and then retraced his steps to Kabul.

But he returned soon afterwards. His second expedition seems to have been rather unimportant and his activities on this occasion were, more or less, confined in the frontier tract. In his third expedition, however, Babur advanced far into the heart of the Punjab and his objective seems to have been Lahore. 'He made a demonstration in force to strengthen his position in Bhira,' and then marched right up to Sialkot. The inhabitants submitted without resistance but not so the people of Sayyidpur.¹ But the attempted defence proved abortive. The garrison was put to the sword and many of the inhabitants appeared to have been carried into captivity. A very interesting sidelight is thrown on this incident by the Sikh *Janam-sākhīs* and some hymns of Guru Nanak incorporated in the *Granth Sāhib*. At the time of the capture of Sayyidpur by Babur, Guru Nanak and his servant Mardana appear to have been near about the scene of occurrence and from the Guru's hymns we get some additional details about the incident. It is a significant fact that as Babur's ultimate object was dominion and not merely plunder, he conducted his Indian campaigns with as much restraint as possible. We have already seen how he punished his soldiers for

¹ The present city of Eminabad in the Gujranwala district. See Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 43.

having taken undue liberty with the Bhira people. It is further stated that when, during his fourth invasion, on Daulat Khan Lodi's surrender at Mulwat, the gates of the fort were opened and the soldiers rushed in without orders, Babur even used violence to prevent outrage. "On the spur of the moment he killed by accident an officer of rank, of his son Humayun's retinue, with an arrow; and though he lamented the circumstance, it is certain his presence alone saved the honour of Daulat Khan's family." ¹ In his third expedition Babur seems to have anticipated an easy march to Lahore and the unexpected resistance of the people of Sayyidpur must have upset his balance. The inhabitants, in this case, were given no quarter. Guru Nanak says, "it was death disguised as a Mughal who made war on us." There appears to have been a general massacre of the people and 'houses, mansions and palaces were burnt.' Even the women were not spared. Says the Guru,

"The wealth and beauty which afforded them pleasure have now become their bane,

The order was given to the soldiers to take and dishonour them."

And again,

"There were the wives of Hindus, of Turks, of Bhattis, and of Rajputs.

The robes of some were torn from head to foot; the dwellings of others were their places of cremation."

The unequal character of the contest also appears to have grieved the Guru. On one side fought a trained, organised army under the leadership of a veteran, and on the other, an extemporised defence force mostly composed of the non-combatants of a peaceful city. The Guru complains,

“ When there was slaughter and lamentation didst not Thou, O God, feel pain ?

Creator, Thou belongest to all.

If a tyrant slay a tyrant, one is not angry ;

But if a ravening lion fall on a herd, its master should show his manliness.”

And the Guru also saw clearly that by neglecting to take proper steps for the defence of his subjects against the onslaughts of Babur, the Lodi sovereign of Delhi was preparing the way for his own ultimate ruin. “ The dogs of Lodi have spoiled the priceless inheritance, when they are dead no one will regard them.”¹ And very soon circumstances took such a turn that the Guru's prognostication was literally fulfilled.

By this time Ibrahim had made himself completely odious to the majority of his nobles and soldiers. Daulat Khan Lodi was summoned to Delhi but he suspected treachery and accordingly sent his son Dilawar instead. This angered Ibrahim, Dilawar was badly received and ‘ was shown a ghastly exhibition of disobedient commanders.’² Dilawar fled to Lahore and reported

¹ For the Guru's comments on the incident at Sayyidpur, see the two hymns in *Āsā*, Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 115, 119.

² A number of these had been kept hanged in a room and Dilawar was shown their skeletons. Elliot, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 23.

matters to his father. Daulat Khan became now convinced that no further reliance could be placed on Ibrahim and sent Dilawar Khan to Babur. Alauddin Alam Khan Lodi, the uncle of Ibrahim, also joined in the invitation and Babur marched for the fourth time into Hindusthan. He easily came up to within 10 miles of Lahore when he encountered Bihar Khan Lodi, who had been sent by Ibrahim against Daulat Khan. The latter had fled on the approach of Bihar Khan, who now came face to face with Babur. Bihar Khan was put to flight and 'Babur's troops followed his fugitive men into Lahore, plundered the town and burned some of the bazars.' Depalpur was next 'stormed, plundered and put to the sword,' but Babur's projected advance on Sarhind had to be given up because of the defection of Daulat Khan Lodi. He was dissatisfied because Babur had not restored him to his old possession of Lahore. He cleverly kept his designs concealed but his son Dilawar betrayed him and Babur put him under arrest. He was, however, soon released and placed in charge of Sultanpur but he fled to the hills and there awaited his chance. This made Babur's position difficult and compelled him to abandon his intended advance. He made arrangements for the government of the Punjab and retired to Kabul.

On Babur's retirement Daulat Khan immediately came down from the hills, 'seized his son Dilawar, took Sultanpur, gathered a large force and defeated Alam Khan 'at Depalpore.' Next he won over a part and broke up the rest of the army that Ibrahim had sent for the reconquest of the Punjab. Upon this Alam Khan fled straight to Kabul and Babur was

easily persuaded to undertake his fifth and last invasion of Hindusthan. Before the climax was reached Daulat Khan died and Babur had an easy passage till he reached the field of Panipat where the final battle was fought. Ibrahim was defeated and slain, Babur entered Delhi in triumph and was proclaimed Emperor of Hindusthan. But the Mughals had yet to suffer another eclipse and Upper India had still to wait more than two decades before it got the blessings of a settled and efficient administration.

Such, in outline, was the political history of the age of Guru Nanak. He says, 'the Kal Age is a knife, kings are butchers,'¹ and it seems that his statement is hardly exaggerated. The Guru lived in an age of almost constant strife and what little the Lodis gave of order and security was, as we have seen, more than counterbalanced by Sikandar's inhuman religious persecution. If the situation is reviewed more closely the details would appear sickening. Loyalty to a cause, even to a family or person, was rarely to be found and everybody seemed to work for his own individual aggrandisement. Shameless opportunism and unscrupulous greed seem to have been the order of the day and the light-hearted manner in which pledges were given only to be broken at the earliest opportunity² bespeaks a moral decadence which was keeping pace only too well with the political disruption from which the country had been suffering. Guru Nanak's castigation of his contemporaries is thorough

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 170.

² A typical illustration of this is found in Bahlol Lodi's dealings with the Shurki sovereign.

and unqualified. "Men nowadays are men only in shape and name : in action they are dogs," ¹ says he.

The moral degradation in which the people were steeped becomes more clear when we attempt to get into closer grips with their religious and social life. It has been said that 'rules which human society devises for its protection and conservation soon become fetters which hamper its development and ensure its degeneration,' and nowhere, perhaps, is this more true than in the field of religion. Formalities and observances are always the means to an end. In almost all cases they are imposed with a view to the creation of a frame of mind favourable to the reception of high spiritual truths. But, as almost always happens, the object behind them is gradually forgotten and they become ends in themselves. The mind is securely bound within the limits of a close circle and free thinking disappears. This has happened again and again in the history of Hinduism but fortunately at each crisis, it had enough vitality left to produce men who again put the house in order by emphasising the relative value of things in matters religious. That in Guru Nanak's days such a crisis had come is true beyond any possibility of doubt. Even a casual reader of the Guru's hymns can see that in his days form had totally supplanted spirit.

On the other hand, the advent of Islam had shaken the Hindu society to its very foundations. It is well known how the Muhammadan conquerors raised pyramids of human heads as they went on in their victorious career from one place to another and how,

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 75, 76.

on the conquest of a new city, the temples therein were turned into mosques and the Hindu inhabitants, in many instances, indiscriminately put to the sword. "Fight for the cause of God" is a Koranic injunction, and it has been said that "Islamic theology tells the true believer that his highest duty is to make exertion in the path of God by waging war against infidel lands till they become a part of the realm of Islam and their populations are converted into true believers."¹ What the original teachings of the Koran, in this respect, were, it is not for us to decide.² The believers are often asked to fight against the infidels, but we read in the Koran itself that infidels were not to be attacked unless they had themselves been the aggressors.³ As regards forcible conversion, it is to be noticed that though some passages of the Koran seem to support it, yet 'Let there be no compulsion in religion'⁴ is also a Koranic injunction, and we

¹ Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. III, p. 249.

² "Fight for the cause of God; and know that God is He who heareth, knoweth."—*Koran* (Rodwell's translation), II, 245.

"Make war upon such of those to whom the scriptures have been given as believe not in God, or in the last day, and who forbid not that which God and his apostle have forbidden, and who profess not the profession of truth until they pay tribute out of hand, and they be humbled."—*Koran*, IX, 29.

"And when the sacred months are passed, kill those who join other gods with god wherever ye shall find them; and besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush."—*Koran*, IX, 5.

³ "And fight for the cause of God against those who fight against you: but commit not the injustice of attacking them first; God loveth not such injustice."—*Koran*, II, 186.

⁴ *Koran*, II, 257.

know that "the Arab conquerors notably in Sind, followed the wise and profitable policy of leaving the shrines and religious practices of the non-Moslem population practically undisturbed."¹ But with the advent of the 'Turkish hordes of Central Asia the more intolerant and iconoclastic tendencies became paramount and 'the destruction of temples and the slaughter of Hindus sanctified every war of aggression.' Even when the invaders settled in the country and established a government of their own, this spirit of intolerance remained the same and humiliations of all sorts were imposed upon the Hindus in order 'to hasten the day of their enlightenment.' The poll-tax, the pilgrim tax, public degradation in dress and demeanour, suppression of religious fairs and processions, prohibition of the building of new temples and the repairing of old ones, systematic repression of the Hindu leaders of society and religion, besides 'rewards in the form of money and public employment offered to apostates from Hinduism' were some of the means adopted by the Government to exterminate the Hindu people.² It is clear that in a regime like this the Hindus had every reason to consider life in a very serious aspect. The Punjab, moreover, was particularly unfortunate in this respect. If the Muslim Government was firmly established anywhere, it was in the Punjab and 'the wave of proselytism had there spread with an overwhelming force.' It should also be noted that 'equality for all,' that Islam preached, could not but have a great influence on the Hindu

¹ Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 253.

² *Ibid*, p. 254.

mind, specially among the lower classes, to whom conversion seemed to offer a panacea for all their grievances.

Generally at such crises two different parties arise who seem to work for the same purpose, *viz.*, self-preservation, but with methods that are entirely different. The conservative become more conservative, more particular about every detail of social life and attempt to save themselves and society by making it scrupulously exclusive and tabooing every little lapse as unpardonable heterodoxy. Intolerant, uncompromising and necessarily irrational in spirit, excommunication remains the only weapon of such a class, and society, the preservation of which is the motto of the party, becomes more stagnant and sterile through the loss of all those elements that make for reform and progress. The other party is the party of reform who wants to move in conformity with the demands of the Time spirit and give up all those stale institutions that cannot withstand the onrush of new ideas. At the time of which we have been speaking, this latter party had not as yet made its appearance in the Punjab. It is undoubtedly true that Nanak did not come alone but that he was the member of a family, the great family of religious teachers who arose in the 15th and 16th centuries. India, at that time, became the scene of a great religious revival, popular in its methods and simple in its characteristics. But we do not know anything definite about the precursors of Nanak in the Punjab, and though it has been suggested that the echo of Kabir's teachings had reached even the land of the Five Rivers and that for many of his ideas Nanak

was indebted to that great teacher, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suppose that at the time of Nanak's advent, the party of uncompromising conservatives still held the sway and society suffered from all the evils that are generally associated with the activities of such a party. Their only care was the preservation of the social system and forgetting totally that the system existed for the man and not the man for the system, they 'fortified the walls of caste and took shelter behind them.'

But even within these narrow limits that they thus set to themselves, they were neither consistent nor sincere. The circumstances of the time, the fact that the Muhammadans were the ruling race, made such a policy of isolation impracticable and the majority, it seems, followed more or less a creed of convenience. Guru Nanak had no mercy for such hypocrites. Says the Guru,

"You tax the cow and the Brahmin; you cannot be saved by the cow-dung.

You wear a loin-cloth, sacrificial mark, and a rosary; yet you earn your living from those whom you call *Malechhas*.

You perform the Hindu worship in private; yet, O my brothers, you read the books of Muhammadans and adopt their manners.

Those who devour men yet read the *Nimaz*;

Those who ply the dagger have sacred strings on their necks,

Even Brahmins, in such people's houses, sound their conches—

And enjoy their food as much as they themselves.

They trade in lies with the capital of falsehood,
and earn their food by speaking lies.

With all their sacred marks on the forehead and
their loin-cloths tucked in behind,

They are butchers of the world, with daggers in
their hands.

They wear blue clothes in order to be acceptable to
the ruling class,

They earn their living from those whom they call
Malechhas; yet they worship the Puranas.

They eat meat of a goat killed in the Muham-
madan fashion, with the unutterable words pronounc-
ed on it.

Yet they allow no access to their cooking squares.

Having smeared a place for cooking purposes
they draw a line around it ;

And sitting within, false as they are,

They say, ' Touch it not ! O touch it not !

Or this food of ours will be polluted.'

But their bodies are already defiled by their foul
deeds,

And their hearts are false even while they rinse
their mouths." ¹

This characteristic hymn brings us at once to the heart
of the matter. Blind conventionalism was leading to
hypocrisy and mammon-worship.

" There is a dearth of truth ; falsehood prevaieth ;
the blackness of this age maketh men demons," ²
says the Guru. " The holy places in the world have
fallen ; there is a tax on the shrines of the Gods ; the
turn of the Shaiks hath come." ³ As Bhai Gurdas

¹ Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, pp. 102-04.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 232.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 84, 117.

says, "Everybody thought he possessed knowledge but none knew in what knowledge or ignorance consisted. Men did what pleased themselves. Alchemy and thaumaturgy were professed, incantations and spells practised, and men indulged in strife, wealth and mutual jealousies."¹ This belief in miracles and incantations seems to have been, more or less, universal and it appears that it played its part even in high matters of state. The Gurn tells us that when Babur invaded Sayyidpur, 'millions of priests tried by their miraculous power to restrain the emperor when they heard of his approach,' but

"He burned houses, mansions and palaces ; he cut princes to pieces and had them rolled in the dust.

No Mughal hath become blind ; no priest hath wrought a miracle."²

We come across an even more clear instance of the belief in incantations and their use in important political deals in connection with the attempted revolt of Jalal Khan, the younger brother of Ibrahim Lodi. It is said that when Ibrahim came to know of his brother's disaffection, he invited him to an immediate personal conference but Jalal Khan declined the invitation as he suspected treachery. Thereupon a deputation of three of the most eminent nobles of the court of Agra was sent to the Prince to persuade him to come and we are told that the deputation, 'among other expedients', resorted to the use of magical charms, in the efficacy of which they had a faith common in

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 115.

that age.' ¹ It is no doubt true that this faith in magical charms and incantations may be found in a section of the people in all ages but that the evil was more universal and rather alarmingly real during the days of Guru Nanak and his successors is proved by the numerous instances in the Sikh records as to how the Gurus resolutely pitted themselves against it. It seems that in every walk of life men had gone astray. Guru Nanak says,

"Greed and sin are ruler and village accountant ;
falsehood is master of the mint.

Lust, his minister, summoneth and examineth
men, and sitteth in judgment on them.

The subjects are blind and without divine knowledge,
and satisfy the judge's greed with bribes.

Priests dance, play musical instruments, disguise,
and decorate themselves ;

They shout aloud, sing of battles, and heroes'
praises.

Fools call themselves pandits and with tricks and
cavilling love to amass wealth.

Pretended religious men spoil their religious acts,
and yet want the door of salvation ;

They call themselves continent, and leave their
houses and homes, yet they know not the way.

Every one is perfect to himself : no one admitteth
himself wanting." ²

This is, no doubt, the language of reaction and might very well be somewhat overdrawn and "the same may also perhaps be said of the remarks of Bhai Gurdas

¹ Erskine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 408.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 232, 233.

who possibly depicts the background in a rather lurid light in order to give the coming of the Guru an advantageous setting. But even if we make adequate allowance for this possible exaggeration, the fact remains that the age of Guru Nanak was an age of ignorance and an age of strife. Bhai Gurdas says that forgetting that Truth was one, the *Sannyāsis* of various denominations, *Jogīs*, *Jangams*, *Digambars* and the like, the representatives of the six different schools of philosophy, the four castes with the four *āśramas*, the Brahmans with their Purans and Veds which they did not understand, all followed their own separate paths, belief in incantations and thaumaturgy became widespread and ignorance reigned triumphant.¹

The Muslims occupied themselves in pulling down temples and building mosques in their stead. They had their fast, their *Id* and their *Nimaz* but the empty formalities without devotion had become sources of bondage rather than of deliverance. *Pirs*, *Paigambars*, *Āulias* and others, each followed his own path but all ended in egotism and pride. Cows were slaughtered. People came to be grouped as the infidels, the faithless, the Armenians, the Rumis and the like, and there was eternal strife. The world was full of sin.²

The Hindus had their four castes, the Muhammadans their four *mazhabs*. The Hindus had their Ganges and Benares, the Muhammadans their Mecca and Kaaba ; the Hindus their frontal marks, the Muhammadans their *sunnat*. Although Ram and

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 19.

² *Ibid*, *Wār*, I, 20

Rahim were one and the same, people pursued different paths. Forgetting the Veds, the people were misled by mammon and became enmeshed in worldly desires. Truth stood apart while the Brahman and the Maulana quarrelled.

And the extreme disgust that all true and sincere men must have felt at the ignorance and perversity of their contemporaries is thus pointedly expressed by Guru Nanak :

“ When I remain silent, they say I have no understanding in my heart ;

When I speak, they say I chatter too much ;

When I sit, they say I have spread my pallet to stay ;

When I go away, they say I have thrown dust on my head ;

When I bow down, they say I perform my devotions through fear.

I can do nothing by which I may spend my time in peace.” ²

The *Granth Sāhib* affords us sufficient materials to develop the theme to an inordinate length but enough has already been said to show that at the time of Guru Nanak's advent, religion there was none. The spirit of both Hinduism and Islam was hidden beneath a mass of formalities and extraneous observances. Tyranny reigned supreme, the tyranny of might, the tyranny of forms and the tyranny of names. The unity of the Godhead was lost in the worship of

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 21.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 80.

numerous *avatārs* and divinities, pirs and *dargāhs* ; pilgrimages and empty ritualistic practices had taken the place of the real devotion of the heart ; blind faith and superstition had driven truth away. The Hindus and the Muhammadans quarrelled, the Brahman and the Mulla wrangled, social and political inequalities reigned rampant and there was strife, eternal strife, everywhere. All aspects of life, social, religious and political, presented the same spectacle, and well might Nanak cry out in despair, “ how shall deliverance be obtained ? ”

CHAPTER III

THE LIFE OF GURU NANAK

It is almost a universal experience that the life-stories of religious teachers gradually become so inextricably mixed up with legends and myths that the real facts become obscured almost beyond recovery. Deification and sectarian enthusiasm soon bring about such a transformation that the human element recedes more and more to the background and the picture that emerges can hardly satisfy anybody outside the circle of the teacher's own devoted and blind admirers. The result has been that of the many striking personalities who have left their mark indelibly on Indian history we know very little worth the name of history or biography. Of course the main thing that mattered about them, *viz.*, their peculiar approach and their ideal of life, survived through their writings or those of their disciples but our understanding of them and their messages would certainly have been more complete if we stood on surer grounds as regards the details of their lives. But here, in almost every instance, the materials that we possess are scanty when reliable and unreliable when abundant, and any critical account on the basis of these is almost beyond possibility. .

Even a cursory review of the materials that we possess for the reconstruction of a biography of Guru Nanak would, we hope, make the point absolutely clear. The oldest of these is most probably the *Janamsākhī*

of Sewa Das, which, according to Macauliffe, was completed in 1588.¹ The old *Janamsākhī* that Dr. Trumpp discovered in the India Office Library and which appears to be a copy of Sewa Das's work is placed by him, 'according to all external and internal marks,' in the latter part of the time of Guru Arjan or in the beginning of Hargobind's pontificate. Trumpp adds that 'we are enabled by the discovery of this *Janamsākhī* to distinguish the older tradition regarding Nanak from the later one, and to fix, with some degree of verisimilitude the real facts of his life.'² Macauliffe also makes the *Janamsākhī* of Sewa Das the basis of his account of Guru Nanak. Besides this old *Janamsākhī*, we have the first *Wār* of Bhai Gurdas, in which also a very scrappy account of Guru Nanak's activities is given. It cannot be definitely said when Bhai Gurdas composed his *Wārs*. He was the learned amanuensis of Guru Arjan and wrote out the *Granth Sāhib* at the latter's dictation. This work is said to have been completed in 1604. Now, it is stated in the Sikh chronicles that when the Guru was selecting the hymns for incorporation in the *Granth Sāhib* he highly praised Bhai Gurdas's works and 'offered to insert them in his *Granth*: but Bhai Gurdas said that they were not worthy of such honour. The Guru complimented him on his modesty and ability and said that whoever read the Bhai's writings should acquire spiritual profit and instruction and faith in the teachings of the Holy Gurus.'³ It would thus appear that portions, at least,

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. lxxxvi.

² Trumpp, *Adi Granth*, Introduction, p. ii.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 63, 64.

of Bhai Gurdas's works were extant even in 1604 and, though internal evidence indisputably proves that some of the *Wārs* were written during the pontificate of Guru Hargobind, Macauliffe is probably right in thinking that Bhai Gurdas wrote his account of Guru Nanak not much more than sixty years after the latter's death.¹

These are the two most reliable records on the life of Guru Nanak. If we leave out the few vague references in Guru Nanak's hymns to possible incidents in his life, we are faced with the fact that we possess no contemporary account of the founder of Sikhism, and the oldest that we have were written, one, half a century and the other, sixty years after his death. It is no doubt true that when Sewa Das and Bhai Gurdas wrote, 'some of Guru Nanak's contemporaries were still alive, and one of them at least retained the vigour of his intellectual faculties.' Macauliffe laments that 'Bhai Gurdas did not write a complete life of the Guru as its details could at that time have been easily obtained.'² At least we might hope that the fact that Bhai Budha, one of the most revered of the disciples of Guru Nanak, was still alive, would have acted as a powerful check on the introduction of doubtful and exaggerated details. But unfortunately, even in these early records, the formation of myths has already made considerable progress. The account of Bhai Gurdas, though extremely scrappy, is yet not entirely free from supernatural touches here and there. We come across a notable instance in connection with

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Introduction, p. lxxiii.

² *Ibid.*

Guru Nanak's adventures in Baghdad. Bhai Gurdas says that the Guru came to Baghdad with the rebeck-player Mardana and took his place outside the city. Guru Nanak shouted the call for prayer and at this a dead silence is said to have pervaded the whole creation. The city of Baghdad was no exception and the Pir Dastgir who lived there became very much astonished. By some super-conscious process he became aware of the presence of an exalted Fakir and came out to meet him. The Pir asked who the Fakir was and to what school he belonged. He was told that the name of the Fakir was Guru Nanak who had taken birth in this Kal Age to put an end to different schools and systems and to establish the one true path. The Pir said rather haughtily that he seemed to be a very great Fakir and had already given some proof of that in Baghdad, but let him give a further demonstration of his powers so that they might all know how great his achievements really were. At this the Guru is said to have taken the Pir's son by the hand and in the twinkling of an eye caused him to journey through hundreds of thousands of upper and nether worlds. Nay more, even a dish full of *karāh prasād* was brought from the nether world.¹ In Bhai Gurdas's account such instances are by no means rare. Indeed it is important to remember that the process that led to 'the gradual investiture of a simple fact with the gorgeous mythism of memory and imagination' has

¹ Bhai Gurdas; *Wār*, I, 35, 36.

Karāh prasād is Sikh sacred food. For the recipe of *karāh prasād* see Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 114. For 'dish' the word in the original is *kachkol*, which literally means a pot formed of half of the shell of the double coconut and which is used by devotees to collect their alms.

already commenced. As Cunningham says, "The unpretending Nanak, the deplorer of human frailty and the lover of his fellow men, becomes, in the mind of Gurdas and of the Sikh people, the first of heavenly powers and emanations, and the proclaimed instrument of God for the redemption of the world."¹

The other work, viz., the *Janamsākhī* of Sewa Das, though undoubtedly the most reliable of all the extant works about Guru Nanak, also falls much below the minimum we would require in studying the details of the Guru's life on historical lines. Besides the introduction of many stories which cannot be included in a critical analysis, the work suffers in another way. As Macauliffe says, "Several of the details of this and of all current *Janamsākhīs* appear to us to be simply settings for the verses and sayings of Guru Nanak. His followers and admirers found dainty word-pictures in his compositions. They considered under what circumstances they could have been produced, and thus devised the framework of a biography in which to exhibit them to the populace."² An illustration, we hope, will make Macauliffe's remark absolutely clear. Among the hymns of Guru Nanak incorporated in the *Granth Sāhib* we come across an acrostic on the Gurumukhi alphabet. Now, the *Janamsākhīs* state that this acrostic was uttered by Guru Nanak when at the age of seven he was taken to the village school by his father for the first time. It is said, that the school-master wrote the thirty-five letters of the alphabet on a piece of slate and asked Nanak to read. Thereupon the

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Introduction, p. lxxxvi

Guru uttered the acrostic referred to above. The Pandit was astonished and is said to have paid reverence to Nanaḱ “because this is a perfect one.”¹ In this instance there cannot be any doubt that the acrostic itself is the origin of the incident at the village school, or in other words, the story was devised in order to give a setting to the acrostic in question. As Trumpp says, no doubt the story was invented in order to account for the verses, as is evident from other cases of the kind.² Thus the position becomes almost desperate. If we leave out these details, as we certainly must, and those that savour of the mythical and supernatural, only a bare skeleton would remain which can hardly be regarded as even the necessary minimum.

The later *Janamsākhīs* are practically useless for our purpose and their chief interest lies in the fact that through them we can trace to its furthest development that process of ‘gorgeous mythism’ which had already made considerable progress in the days of Bhai Gurdas. Leaving aside Bhai Mani Singh’s *Gyān Ratnāwalī*, which is primarily an expansion of the first *Wār* of Bhai Gurdas, we come next to the *Nānak Prakās*, a work written in 1823, nearly three centuries after the death of Guru Nanak. By this time imagination has assumed almost complete control. Taking his cue from the current tradition that Guru Nanak had visited Ceylon during his peregrinations, Bhai Santokh Singh coolly narrates how the Guru met Hanuman and Bibhikhan.³ The Guru is further made to

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. viii.

² *Ibid*, p. iii.

³ *Nānak Prakās*, Part II, xviii.

have had meetings with Prahlad, Dhruba and several other *bhaktas* of old and sometimes long dialogues are introduced in order to give a touch of reality to the narration.¹ In fact, imagination once let loose does not stop till it has effected a complete metamorphosis of the personality of Nanak and brought him into line with the legendary figures of old.

Most of the later *Janamsākhīs* seem to have been based on the work of Bhai Santokh Singh, wherein we are introduced for the first time to the story of the compilation of a *Janamsākhī* under the auspices of Guru Angad.² We read in the *Nānak Prakās* that there was a pious Sikh named Bala Sandhu who had been a direct disciple of Nanak. One day he thought within himself: who it was whom the Master appointed in his place to carry on the mission? On enquiry he came to learn that it was Guru Angad who had his residence at Khadur, and Bala thereupon came on a visit to Guru Nanak's successor. Guru Angad is said to have asked Bala whose disciple he was and what his religious convictions were. Bala informed Angad that he was a disciple of Guru Nanak and that he had been associated with the Master since his very childhood. On hearing this Guru Angad became exceedingly pleased and asked Bala to tell him all that he knew about the Master. Bala began with the circumstances of the birth of Guru Nanak and incidentally informed

¹ *Nānak Prakās*, Part I, lxxvi, lxxii.

² *Ibid*, Part I, ii. We are, however, told that "Miharban, Prithi Chand's son, wrote a *janam sakhi* of Guru Nanak, wherein he eulogised his father. It contains the first mention of Bhai Bala." (*Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. III, p. 104.) But as no details are vouchsafed we refrain from any comment on the matter.

Angad that a *janampatrī* or horoscope had been drawn up by a Brahman at the time of the Master's birth and it must have been with his father Kalu. Though Kalu was now dead it might not be improbable that the horoscope was still with his younger brother Lalu. Bala himself volunteered to go to Lalu to bring the *janampatrī* and went to Talwandi accompanied by a Sikh named Pannu Lal. Lalu appeared to have known nothing about the horoscope but he agreed to a search being instituted in the house and it is said that after five days of close and rigid hunt the horoscope was found at last. Angad was pleased beyond measure when the horoscope was brought to him, placed it on his head and heartily praised Bhai Bala for having in this manner put him in touch with his Master. However, on looking at the horoscope Guru Angad found that it was in Sanskrit¹ and as apparently none of those present knew the script, the Guru enquired whether some one could be found who might transliterate the horoscope into Gurumukhi.² At this a Jat, named Mahima Khaira, is said to have suggested that Paira Mukha Khaira of Sultanpur might be brought for the purpose. Mahima Khaira himself was sent to Sultanpur and very soon he came back with Paira Mukha. On the latter's arrival Guru Angad asked him to write out the *janampatrī* in Gurumukhi. Bhai Santokh Singh then gives a list of the more important

¹ *Sahas kṛti aṅgar*, i.e., *Devanāgarī* script.

² Relying on this incident Trumpp wrote that Guru Angad was altogether unlettered and could himself neither read nor write. (*Adi Granth*, Introduction, p. lxxviii.) But it proves nothing of the kind. All that can be said is that Guru Angad was ignorant of the script in which the horoscope was written.

Sikhs who were present there to hear the story, Bhai Budha, Bhai Jiwa and Amar Das among others. And then we are told that 'Bala narrated the story, Paira wrote it out and that Guru Angad caused it to be written for the edification of the world.'¹

Trumpp was the first to draw attention to the incongruities of the story² and Macauliffe has effectively exploded this myth of a *Janamsākhī* compiled in the days of Guru Angad. As the latter points out, the popular *Janamsākhīs*, 'which no doubt have been compiled by altering some one original volume,' are written in the current Punjabi dialect whereas the *Janamsākhī* of Bala, if it ever existed, must have been written in the archaic language of Guru Angad's time. Moreover, with regard to Bhai Bala himself 'it is remarkable that Guru Angad, who was so well acquainted with Guru Nanak, knew so little of Bala that he is represented as having asked whose disciple he was.' If Bala had really been a close companion of Nanak, as he is represented to be, he must certainly have been known to Guru Angad. Finally, it is also remarkable that the list that Bhai Gurdas gives in his eleventh *Wār* of the well-known Sikhs up to his own time, as also the more complete list given by Bhai Mani Singh in his *Gyān Ratnāvalī*, does not mention Bala. It is thus extremely doubtful whether any *Janamsākhī* of Guru Nanak had been compiled in the days of Guru Angad and it would seem that the author of the *Janamsākhī*, upon which all the later ones are based, invented the fiction in order to gain credence for

¹ *Nānak Prakāś*, Part I, II, 79.

² Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. v.

his narrative.¹ Indeed a careful study of the account of the compilation given by Bhai Santokh Singh leaves little doubt that the *janampatrī* is really the vital theme of the matter and that the story of the *Janamsākhī* has been super-imposed. It seems to us that the bringing of the *janampatrī* and its transliteration or translation into Gurumukhi were historical facts, which were seized upon by a later writer who added a *Janamsākhī* to the *janampatrī* and thereby gave currency to the fiction that a biography of Guru Nanak had been compiled under the auspices of Guru Angad.

The more recent *Janamsākhīs*, almost all of which profess to have been based on the work of Bala, need not detain us but this rapid sketch of the sources of information about Guru Nanak would hardly be complete without a notice of the *Dabistān*. The author of this work, who wrote under the pseudonym of Mohsin Fani, appears to have been a contemporary of the fifth, sixth and seventh Gurus and a personal friend of the sixth Guru, Hargobind, with whom he even occasionally corresponded.² The testimony of this writer must, therefore, be regarded as of special value, particularly as he is an independent witness. In the midst of the Sikh *Janamsākhīs*, with their cobweb of miraculous and absurd myths, this work brings in a welcome and refreshing relief, but it must be said that Mohsin Fani's account of Guru Nanak as well is, on the whole, disappointing. Though on several points the *Janamsākhīs* receive independent corroboration and a few details are added here and

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Introduction, pp. lxxviii, lxxix.

² *Dabistān*, Translation by Troyer and Shea, Vol. II, p. 281.

there, most of it is concerned with mythical stories about the founder of Sikhism which Mohsin Fani had heard from the Sikhs of his day. Indeed, the *Dabistān* indisputably confirms what we said in connection with the work of Bhai Gurdas, viz., that by the time of the fifth Guru deification had already made startling progress. Mohsin Fani tells us in one place that according to the belief of the Sikhs 'Baba Nanak is a god, and the world his creation.' He adds that Nanak reckoned himself merely as a servant of God, 'who is without a bodily frame.' But we are told that 'the Sikhs say that Nanak, in the same manner, had been without a real body, but visible by the power of his individuality.'¹ However, several of the stories that Mohsin Fani incorporates in his work seek to establish rather the divine character of the mission of Nanak than an actual identity between Nanak and God Himself. Learned Sikhs are reported to have told Mohsin Fani a story, the point of which appears to be that Guru Nanak had begun his work of deliverance from the Sat-Yug. When he was born in that age a large number of Sikhs assembled around him but a few only could pass the required test and the rest were told to wait till the next age, viz., the Treta-Yug when they would meet the Guru again. This time also a few passed through, the same thing happened again in the Dwapar Age, till at last the Guru assumed his present birth to continue his work of emancipation.² It is also stated that "when Nanak died in the Sat-Yug, two roads opened before his soul: the one led

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 253.

² *Ibid*, pp. 268, 269.

to heaven, the other to hell. Nanak chose the latter, and having descended below, he brought all the inhabitants out of hell. The Lord God said to him : ' These sinners cannot enter heaven; you must return into the world and liberate them.' On that account Nanak came to this world, and his followers are the former inhabitants of hell ; the Guru comes and goes, until that multitude shall have found their salvation.'¹ We are further told that ' Guru Nanak, according to the belief of his followers, was in former times the rājā called Janak, and united the dignity of a king with that of a saint.'² These and other stories testifying to the eternal character of Nanak as a deliverer and the miraculous powers that he possessed form the bulk of what Mohsin Fani writes about the founder of Sikhism. Nevertheless, the little that remains is illuminating and must, circumstanced as we are, be regarded as invaluable.

Our position is thus a desperate one and it can be easily seen that though there might be a very interesting study on the *biographies* of Guru Nanak, we have hardly any material for a satisfactory biography on critical lines. Indeed, when the attempt is made ' to get rid of the fable mixed up with the Sikh legends, and to work the residue of fact into some sort of historical order,' difficulties crop up at almost every step. The only two dates about Nanak which we have known more or less definitely are those of his birth and death, and throughout the huge interval of about seventy years we have to grope in the dark as best as

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 269.

² *Ibid*, p. 268.

we can with the assistance of the dim, reflected light of one or two independent references. The hymns of Nanak do not help us in any way, for, so far as these are concerned, we may very well repeat what Carpenter says about the verses of Kabir: "His copious utterances may be classified according to their metres, but they cannot be arranged in dates. The clues to his spiritual history are lost, and the phases of his experience toss to and fro in his verses, lighting up his character and illustrating his moods, but obscuring his development."¹ The chronological difficulty arising out of the meagreness of fixed dates might have been to some extent obliterated if we had been more or less certain about the general sequence of events. But, unfortunately, here again the authorities do not always agree and it sometimes becomes very difficult to reconcile them with the few hints that we get indirectly from more reliable records. We would, therefore, preface the account that follows with the remark that in it an attempt has been made only to provide a broad framework and that very often quantity has been unhesitatingly sacrificed to quality.

The earlier part of Guru Nanak's life constitutes a well defined period and the main trend of events is comparatively easier to trace. From his birth at Talwandi ² in 1469 down to his resignation of the

¹ Estlin Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

² Modern Nankana, 'a village situated on the river Ravi, 35 miles south-west of Lahor, in the Sarakpur sub-division of the Lahor district.' (Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I, p. 73.) Recently the place came very much into public prominence owing to the most cold-blooded massacre of a Sikh *Jāthā* perpetrated there by the Mahant Narain Das and his men. (The details of the tragedy may be read in the *Gurdwara*

office that he held under Daulat Khan Lodi, we can trace in him an intense inward struggle, kept alive by his constant association with Fakirs and culminating in a final enlightenment when at Sultanpur he made his first significant utterance that 'there is no Hindu and no Musalman,' and definitely took upon himself the rôle of a teacher of men. The *Janamsākhīs* give us the impression that from his very boyhood the Guru exhibited symptoms of an other-worldly temperament and that he soon proved himself an embarrassment and a disappointment to his more worldly-minded parents. They got him married and tried various expedients to bring him to a sense of the stern realities of worldly existence, but all their efforts proved fruitless. 'In the dense forests around Talwandi were to be found ascetics and anchorets who sought the extreme retirement of the locality for the combined objects of undisturbed prayer and escape from the persecution of bigoted Moslem rulers.' Guru Nanak preferred to pass most of his time in the company of these men and persisted in doing nothing 'useful' and it was possibly the intervention of Rai Bular, the owner of the village, who appears to have been one of the earliest admirers of the Guru, that prevented his father from going to unpleasant extremes. At last an invitation came

Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening, Lahore, 1922, pp. 220-239.) It is one of the most important places of Sikh pilgrimage. "Besides *Janam sthan*, the house of Baba Kalu where Guru Nanak was born, there are several other places in the town associated with the different events of Guru Nanak's boyhood." 'There is also a place sacred to Guru Har Gobind who had come and tied his horse to a tree which is still preserved.' (*Ibid*, pp. 212-213.) See also *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 676, f. n. 2.

from Nanak's brother-in-law, Jai Ram, who was an officer of Daulat Khan Lodi at Sultanpur and through his influence Nanak was appointed a grain-factor. There he worked for some time, apparently to the satisfaction of his employer, but it is said that one morning he disappeared in the river and on his unexpected reappearance after three days, he threw away his appointment, distributed all that he had among the poor, wore the garb of a Fakir and, with Mardana as his companion, set out on travels.

The first important incident of Guru Nanak's life appears to have been his admission to the village school when he was seven years old. We have already noticed the story, how, according to the *Janamsākhīs*, Guru Nanak astounded his teacher by composing an acrostic on the alphabet as soon as the Pandit had written the characters on a slate for him to read. A similar story is told of the Guru's first meeting with his Persian teacher with another acrostic on the Persian alphabet to boot.¹ In short, the *Janamsākhīs* want to make it appear that Guru Nanak had little to learn from his teachers. As Macauliffe says, "The scholastic ignorance of the founders of great religions has been made the subject of many a boast on the part of their followers. The object, of course, is that the acquirements and utterances of the religious teachers

¹ *Nānak Prakāś*, Part I, vii; Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 11-15. "This composition is not found in the Granth Sahib. Some Sikhs deny that it is the composition of Guru Nanak." There can be little doubt that in the first instance the incident in the village school has been inspired by the acrostic, and in the second both the acrostic and the story by the earlier ones.

may be attributed solely to divine inspiration.”¹ But there is satisfactory internal evidence in Guru Nanak’s own compositions that he had become a fairly good Persian scholar and it has been said that he was introduced to Daulat Khan Lodi by his brother-in-law Jai Ram as an educated man.² There is thus no reason to think that Guru Nanak was practically an uneducated man as the *Janamsākhīs* seem to suggest.

The next important incident of Guru Nanak’s life was his investment with the sacred thread when he was nine years old. On the basis of a composition that occurs in the *Āsā kī Wār*, the *Janamsākhīs* have woven a long story in connection with this incident.³ As we have tried to show elsewhere, there can be little doubt that the details were invented later on and that the stanzas in the *Āsā kī Wār*, referred to above, suggested them. Five years later⁴ Guru Nanak was married to ‘Sulakhani, daughter of Mula, a resident of Batala in the present district of Gurdaspur.’ In course of time Guru Nanak had two sons and possibly also daughters,⁵ but his other-worldly temperament continued as before. ‘He kept company with Fakirs, with any one else he did not converse.’ Indeed, it seemed that he was becoming unfit for all secular occupation and it is no wonder that he was completely misunderstood. His actions were attributed to insanity and his spiritual ecstasies

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 10

² *Ibid*, p. 33.

³ *Nānak Prakās*, Part II, ix.

⁴ Bhai Mani Singh’s *Gyān Ratnāvalī* (Gulab Singh and Sons), p. 103.

⁵ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

confused with illness. His father Kalu first tried him in the capacity of a herdsman, then in that of a cultivator and finally attempted to turn him into a merchant but all to no purpose. The *Janamsākhīs* narrate these incidents in great detail, but it would be enough for us to know that in none of these did the Guru show any promise of worldly success. At last being thoroughly disgusted his father agreed to the proposal of Jai Ram that the Guru should be sent to Sultanpur and there enter government service.

We now come to the great turning-point in Guru Nanak's career. On Jai Ram's recommendation Daulat Khan Lodi appointed Nanak his store-keeper¹ and we are told that this time the Guru performed his duties to the entire satisfaction of his employer. The life of the Guru at Sultanpur is thus described by the old *Janamsākhī*: "The Khan was very much pleased. Whatever salary Guru Nanak got, of that he ate something, the rest he gave away for God's sake. By night he sang always praise to God. Afterwards Mardana, the Dum, came from Talvandi and remained with the Baba. To others, who came afterwards, he procured an interview with the Khan and a stipend, all got their bread by the favour of Guru Nanak. All were pleased and when the Baba's food was prepared, they all came and sat down. By night continually praise was said and when as yet a watch of the night was remaining, the Baba went to the river to bathe. When it became dawn of day, he put on his clothes, applied the tilak to his forehead, and having taken the account book in

¹ It seems that Guru Nanak acted as an assistant of his brother-in-law Jai Ram, who was in charge of Daulat Khan's granary.

the office he sat down to write.”¹ But the Guru was not destined to continue long in this manner. We are told that one day, on going to the river to bathe, he stripped himself of his clothes and disappeared. A vigorous search was instituted but it proved fruitless, and Nanak was given up for lost. Three days later he miraculously reappeared. “Nanak entered his house ; giving away everything he removed his abode far off. He continued in silence for one day. The following day he rose and said : ‘There is no Hindu and there is no Musalman.’ ”² Speaking historically, this was the first significant utterance of Guru Nanak and with it began his career as a religious teacher and reformer.

The *Janamsākhīs*, as usual, have loaded this incident with fables and myths, beneath which the real facts are almost irrecoverably hidden. Regarding Guru Nanak’s disappearance in the river we are solemnly told that ‘according to the order of the Lord, servants took him away to the threshold of the Lord.’ There the Guru had an interview with the Almighty Lord, who charged him with the mission of preaching the glory of his Name. Then came the order ; ‘Nanak on whom thy favourable look is, on him is also mine ; on whom thy benevolence is, on him is also mine. My name is : the Supreme Brahma, the Supreme Lord ; and thy name is : the Guru, the Supreme Lord.’³ Then, according to the order of the Lord, on the third day Guru Nanak was brought back to the very ferry

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

² *Ibid*, p. xii.

³ *Ibid*, pp. xi, xii.

where he had disappeared and the Guru came out of the river. It is clear that this story has been introduced in order to establish a divine sanction for the mission of Nanak and in attempting this the author of the *Janamsākhī* has not hesitated even to seek an identity between him and the Lord in direct opposition to the Guru's own teachings. The utmost that this story can mean to a student of history is that at this time Guru Nanak felt an irresistible urge within himself, call it divine if you like, to proclaim the truth that he had inwardly realised.

Further, it appears that when on his return after his miraculous disappearance the Guru entered his house, he gave away not only his own belongings but also the property of his employer, Daulat Khan Lodi. The later *Janamsākhīs* develop this incident in great detail, and we are told that complaints having reached the ears of the Khan that the Guru was in the habit of distributing to the Fakirs things belonging to the State, he ordered an enquiry to be made into his accounts. But on investigation it was found that the Guru's accounts were not only correct but that money was due to him from the State.¹ The *Janamsākhīs* do not deny that Guru Nanak had actually given away to the Fakirs things belonging to the Khan but indirectly suggest that it was through a miracle worked by the Guru that inspite of this his accounts showed excess. But it seems almost certain that the truth of the matter is given in the following statement of the *Dabistān*:
 “ A durvish came to Nanac, and subdued his mind in

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 42, 43; Bhai Mani Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 107ff; *Nānak Prakāś*, Part I, xxix.

such a manner that he, Nanak, having entered the granary, gave away the property of Daulat Khan, and his own, whatever he found there and in his house, and abandoned his wife and children. Daulat Khan was struck with astonishment at hearing this, but recognising in Nanak the mark of a *durvish*, he withheld his hand from hurting him."¹ There is nothing improbable in the statement that in the fullness of his heart Nanak had given away the property of Daulat Khan Lodi. On the other hand, the *Janam-sākhīs* are unanimous in stating that the Khan had always a very high opinion of Guru Nanak's work and character. Indeed, Bhai Gurdas seems to claim this very Daulat Khan as a *Sikh* of Guru Nanak.² Under the circumstances, it is not difficult to believe that Daulat Khan had willingly refrained from taking any steps against the Guru.³

The statement of Mohsin Fani brings in another very interesting question. His remark that the Guru's renunciation was due primarily to the influence exercised on his mind by a certain *darvesh* makes one naturally curious to know who this man was and what was the nature of his hold on Nanak. We have already seen that Guru Nanak passed most of his time

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, pp. 247, 248.

² Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, XI, 13.

³ Malcolm, however, states that Daulat Khan put Jai Ram under arrest but Nanak came forward and expressed his readiness to render the strictest account of all he had lost. "The Khan accepted his proposal : Jai Ram's accounts were settled and to the surprise of all, a balance was found in his favour on which he was not only released, but reinstated in the employment and favour of his master."—*Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 15.

in association with Fakirs and anchorets and it can easily be conceded that he learnt much from them. But the Sikh records give us no indication that Nanak was specially indebted to any particular individual. To men who regarded Nanak as God the very idea of any earthly superior was absurd. It is no doubt true that in his compositions Nanak often speaks of his 'Guru,' but in these instances the word is generally taken in the sense of God, and Macauliffe actually says that 'Nanak's Guru was God.'¹ But the recent discovery at Baghdad seems to lend some support to the statement of the *Dabistān*. One of the Sikh commanders, who went to Mesopotamia during the last Great War, writing to the "Loyal Gazette" of Lahore in January, 1918, says that "he saw the place commemorating the visit of Guru Nanak to Baghdad. Outside the city to the south-west beside a grave-yard, there is an open room situated within an enclosure wall. In one corner of the room is a platform on which Guru Nanak is said to have sat, while he was conversing with Shah Bahlol who sat on another platform in the opposite corner. The present priest named Sayad Usaf, who is in charge of the place, described himself as the tenth in succession to the first incumbent of the place."² But the most important thing for our present purpose is the inscription in Turkish that was found on the wall behind the platform. The inscription may be translated thus:

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 54, fn. 1.

² *The Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, pp. 1, 2, f. n.

“Guru Murad died. Baba Nanak Fakir helped in constructing this building which is an act of grace from a virtuous follower. 927 A. H.”¹ Guru Nanak thus appears to have been a follower of Guru Murad and it may not be improbable that the latter is the person referred to by Mohsin Fani.

Whatever that may be, as we have seen above Guru Nanak had reached the supreme crisis in his career. His remark that ‘there is no Hindu and no Musalman’ at once brought him to the forefront at Sultanpur. Some, no doubt, regarded him with derision and attributed his remark to insanity but he could not be left alone for long. His remark was not only astounding but sounded offensive and the *Janamsākhīs* state that at last the Kazi prevailed upon Daulat Khan Lodi to call Guru Nanak to his presence. On being questioned as to the meaning of his utterance the Guru explained that both the Hindus and the Muhammadans had forgotten the precepts of their religions, and his words are said to have carried so much conviction that everybody was amazed. The amazement turned into reverence when at the time of the afternoon prayer the Guru told the Kazi and the Khan point-blank that their prayers had not been accepted by God because while they ostensibly performed divine service, the one had been thinking of a new-born filly which he had kept unbound at home and feared lest it might fall into the well within the enclosure, and the other of purchasing horses in Kabul. At this ‘the Sayyids, the sons of the Shekhs, the Kazi, the Mufti, the Khan,

¹ For the translation of this inscription I am indebted to the courtesy of my colleague the late lamented Maulana Aga Muhammad Kazim Shirazi.

the chiefs and leaders were amazed,' and when the Guru uttered a hymn showing how salvation could be obtained, all became convinced that ' God was speaking through Nanak's mouth.' It is said that the ' Nawab, in an outburst of affectionate admiration, offered him a sacrifice of his authority and estate ' but the Guru was in no mood to care for worldly possessions and we are told that after a short stay with some Fakirs he went out on travels in the garb of an *Udāsī* ¹ with Mardana as his companion. It is clear that much of the above story is unacceptable to a critical student of history and there is little doubt that portions of it have been built up on the basis of certain verses occurring in the compositions of Nanak. But the fact stands that on this occasion the Guru had made a great stir at Sultanpur.²

Our account of Nanak hitherto has, no doubt, been scrappy and unsatisfactory; nevertheless, we have been able to trace the general sequence and the main trend of events, more or less, accurately. But henceforward even this becomes difficult. Trumpp writes, " with the commencement of the wanderings of Nanak nearly all points in common cease and the old and the later tradition diverge in such a manner that they cannot be reconciled. This proves sufficiently, either that very little was known about them or that very little could be said about them, as the old *Janamsākhī*

¹ Literally, a man who has renounced the world. For the garb that the Guru took up on this occasion, see Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 58.

² For details see Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 34-43; *Nānak Prakāś*, Part I, xxviii, xxx, xxxi.

testifies.”¹ It is true that Trumpp took an unduly gloomy view of the matter. His theory that the story of the Guru’s visit to Southern India and Ceylon ‘is so mixed up with the miraculous, that it bears the stamp of fable on its front,’ and his characterisation of Nanak’s alleged journey to Mekka as ‘an invention from beginning to end’² have been completely disproved by recent discoveries, but the fact still remains that even on the basis of the oldest *Janamsākhī* it is not always possible to give an outline, in the proper sequence, of the main incidents of Nanak’s life posterior to his retirement from Sultanpur. The discovery of the inscription at Baghdad, no doubt, gives us a fixed date but this makes matters more complex. In the face of it the arrangement in the old *Janamsākhī* can no longer be accepted as true, though we hardly possess the requisite material to attempt a fresh one. It appears that after remaining in the Punjab and its vicinity for some time the Guru set out towards the east. He went as far as Kamrup, visited Puri and after various adventures returned to Talwandi, his birth place. It was now twelve years since the resignation of his office under Daulat Khan Lodi. The Guru is said to have halted in a forest about three miles distant from the village. He met his parents and relations there and then again set out on travels with his companion Mardana. It seems that the Guru now began a detailed tour throughout the Punjab. From Sialkot in the north to Mithankot in the south he visited almost every place of importance

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. v.

² *Ibid*, pp. v, vi.

and the Sikhs claim that he succeeded in making a good many converts. It was in course of this tour that he came in the vicinity of the city of Sayyidpur when that city was captured and pillaged by the soldiers of Babur. We know that this incident occurred during the third Indian expedition of Babur and must therefore be placed in the year 1524. Now, the difficulty is that the Baghdad inscription, referred to above, is dated 927 A.H., which is equivalent to 1520-21 A.D.¹ Guru Nanak, therefore, must have visited Baghdad in 1520-21 or some time previously. The difficulty is not obviated even if we postulate two separate visits on the part of Nanak to Baghdad. In any case, the arrangement of the *Janamsākhī*s cannot be accepted.

There is no hint anywhere as to the age of Guru Nanak when he became an *Udāsī* and went out on travels. It is stated in the *Gyān Ratnāwalī* that when the Guru was twenty years old he had been thinking of going out on pilgrimage and had actually asked Mardana if he would accompany him.² We are also told that just on the eve of his departure for Sultanpur the Guru reminded Mardana of the proposal and told him that they would go out on travels as soon as Mardana would be free to join him.³ If there is any truth in these statements it appears that the Guru's renunciation could not have taken place later than his twenty-fifth year at the utmost. It is clear

¹ 927 A. H. begins on December 12, 1520 and ends on November 30, 1521.

² Bhai Mani Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

³ *Ibid*, p. 106.

that the Guru did not remain long at Talwandi after his initial proposal to Mardana and that his stay at Sultanpur was not a protracted one. The Guru having been born in 1469 this would bring us somewhere near the year 1495. The *Janamsākhīs* state that Guru Nanak revisited Talwandi twelve years after he had left Sultanpur. Having regard to the fact that there is a custom among *Sannyāsīs* of revisiting their birth-place twelve years after their initiation, this statement may be accepted as true and consequently it seems that the first period of the Guru's travels ended some time about 1507.

The *Janamsākhīs* call this first tour of Guru Nanak his 'travels in the east.' Many adventures are piously narrated, but if we leave out the miraculous and those details which appear to be simply "settings for the verses and compositions of Guru Nanak," very little remains besides a series of names of places which the Guru is said to have successively visited. According to the old *Janamsākhī*, 'taking Mardana with him he wandered about; they did not enter any village, they did not stop in any jungle nor on any river.' It appears that the Guru was performing great austerities particularly in the matter of eating and Mardana sometimes found it difficult to keep company with a man who required little or no nourishment.¹ Mohsin Fani says, "At first he took little nourishment; afterwards he allowed himself but to taste a little cowmilk; next a little oil; then nothing but water, and at last he took nothing but air."² Bhai Gurdas also testifies

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

² *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 248.

to the austerities observed by Nanak ¹ and the difficulties of Mardana, alluded to in the *Janamsākhī*, must have been very hard as the Guru at first seems to have scrupulously avoided human habitations. However, the Guru met his first notable adventure when he came upon Shekh Sajan, a notorious robber. This man is said to have built a temple and a mosque for his Hindu and Muhammadan guests respectively and 'he otherwise ostensibly provided them with everything necessary for their comfort.' But this pompous hospitality was merely a cloak, for when his guests went to sleep he threw their bodies into a well and misappropriated their belongings. 'Next morning he took up a pilgrim's staff and rosary, and spread out a carpet to pray in the true spirit of an ancient Pharisee.' He attempted to play the same trick with Nanak but the latter proved too much for him, the incident ending in the complete reclamation of Shekh Sajan.

Hereafter really begins the Guru's wanderings in the east but the conflict among the authorities becomes so frequent that the details become more and more difficult of acceptance. According to the old *Janamsākhī*, the Guru next came to Panipat but the later works mention visits to Kurkhetar and Hardwar in between. The old record states that at this time the Guru practised wind-eating ² and we have seen that all the more reliable authorities agree, but the later tradition has it that when the Guru was at Kurkhetar, 'needing refreshment he began to cook a

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 24.

² Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

deer which a disciple had presented to him.' The Brahmans are said to have expressed their horror at the sight, whereupon the Guru remarked :

“ Man is first conceived in flesh, he dwelleth in flesh.
When he quickeneth, he obtaineth a mouth of flesh;
his bone, skin, and body are made of flesh.
When he is taken out of the womb, he seizeth teats
of flesh.
His mouth is of flesh, his tongue is of flesh, his breath
is in flesh.
When he groweth up he marrieth, and bringeth flesh
home with him.
Flesh is produced from flesh; all man's relations are
made from flesh.”

And so on.¹ As there can be little doubt that the original incident of the Guru's cooking a deer is an invention, we may reasonably conclude that this is an instance of what Macauliffe calls 'settings for the verses and compositions of Guru Nanak,' or in other words, that the whole story has been suggested by the verses that have been put here in the mouth of the Guru in reply to the disgust expressed by the Brahmans. It may very well be that another consideration also has been at work here. It was the sixth Guru Hargobind who first permitted animal diet to his followers ; that it was not tolerated during the earlier days of Sikhism is clearly proved by the testimony of the *Dabistān*. Mohsin Fani says, “ Having prohibited his disciples to drink wine and to eat pork,

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 47-49.

he (Nanac) himself abstained from eating flesh, and ordered not to hurt any living being. After him, this precept was neglected by his followers; but Arjunmal, one of the substitutes of his faith, renewed the prohibition to eat flesh, and said: 'This has not been approved by Nanac.'"¹ It may not be improbable that when meat-eating became common among the Sikhs this story was invented to find for it a precedent in the practices and precepts of Guru Nanak and the verses in question were brought under requisition, though in reality they neither support nor reject meat-eating but are homily addressed to those who confuse religious purity with abstention from flesh. In this manner the later works, in most cases, make confusion worse confounded and it would be futile to expect in them any useful material for sober history. We are thus left almost exclusively to the old record for following up the subsequent adventures of Guru Nanak.

At Panipat the Guru is said to have met a Pir named Shekh Saraf with whom he had a long discourse, at the end of which the Shekh recognised in Nanak a superior being, 'kissed his hands and feet and went to his house.' Going next to Delhi the Guru revived a dead elephant belonging to Sultan Ibrahim Lodi. After one or two unimportant adventures the Guru and Mardana came to Benares. Here lived a Brahman named Chatur Das with whom the Guru is represented to have entered into a long controversy, the Brahman being finally humbled as usually happened in all such cases. The details appear to be 'settings' and need not, therefore, detain us. We come

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 248.

next to the adventure at Nanakmata.¹ Here a huge pipal-tree of 'many a religious reminiscence' had long withered from age but it is said that 'a small smoking fire was kindled there by Nanak and it became green again.' The Jogīs who resided there became astonished and after a brief conversation paid him reverence. Unfortunately, from this point the *Janam-sākhī* abandons all seriousness and descends almost completely into the realms of phantasy. The Guru's encounter with a body of Thags who come to kill and rob him and are finally brought to their senses by being shown a funeral pyre where troops of Yama and Rama are found quarrelling; his journey to the Kauru country (Kamrup ?) where Mardana is transformed into a ram by a sorceress and is brought back to human form by the Guru's powers, and finding all her charms fail against the Guru, Nur Shahī, the head of the conjurers, falls down at Nanak's feet and becomes a worshipper of the *Name* ; his meeting with Kal Yug who comes to frighten him assuming a visible form ; Nanak's journey to the city of ants where 'when they looked about, trees and shrubs, all appeared black' ; all these belong to the domain of fable and, indeed, it seems that it is not till we trace the Guru back to the Punjab that we can discern faint glimpses of possible facts. The only other incident during this

¹ Situated about 20 miles north of Pilibhit in the United Provinces. Macauliffe says that the place was originally called Gorakhmata but is now called Nanakmata in memory of the Guru's visit (see Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 59). As we shall see later on, it became a place of considerable importance in the history of Sikhism and Guru Hargobind is said to have actually led an expedition there in order to rescue it from the Jogīs who are said to have usurped the place.

first tour of Guru Nanak that we may notice is his meeting with Shaikh Brahm, the then incumbent of Shaikh Farid's shrine at Ajodhan.¹ It appears that 'Mardana had by this time had enough of travel, hardship and hunger' and became anxious to return home. The Guru also saw the propriety of once visiting his birth-place after twelve years of wandering and accordingly retraced his steps towards Talwandi.²

The *Janamsākhīs* make it appear that the Guru now began a detailed tour of the Punjab but as we have already stated our reasons for thinking that the incidents connected with this tour must be placed later, we would come at once to 'the second retired life of the Guru passed in the South.' It is said that accompanied by two Jats named Saido and Gheho the Guru proceeded towards the south and reached the Dravidian country. On this occasion "he got his livelihood by filling his begging vessels with morsels ; on his feet he had sandals of wood, in his hand a staff, on his head rolls of rope ; on his forehead as Tilak the paint of a point."³ But the whole narrative is so grossly overloaded with fabulous myths that it is difficult to blame Trumpp for having discredited its authenticity. In fact, excepting the story of the Guru's meeting with a Jain priest and some aspects

¹ According to the old *Janamsākhī* the Guru met Shaikh Farid himself but as the latter was long dead the then incumbent of his shrine must have been meant. See Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 84.

² Laying the later works under contribution Macauliffe gives a much fuller account but we have already stated, more than once, our reasons for omitting the additional details.

³ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiv.

of his relations with Raja Shivnath of Ceylon the whole thing appears to be a long excursion into the realms of the supernatural. Regarding the Guru's visit to Ceylon Trumpp wrote: "It is based on altogether erroneous suppositions, the king and the inhabitants of Ceylon being represented as common Hindus, the Sikh author being quite unaware of the fact that the popular religious belief there was Buddhism. That Nanak founded there a 'Sangat' (congregation), the order of whose divine service even is detailed, contradicts all history, and is an invention of later times, when Sikhism had commenced to spread to the south."¹ It cannot be said that these remarks are entirely uncalled for, but at the same time there can be little doubt that whatever the details might be, the main story of Guru Nanak's journey to South India and Ceylon has now been, more or less, definitely substantiated by the discovery of a manuscript at Dacca by Gurbaksh Singh. It purports to be 'the itinerary of a pilgrim to the Sikh temples in Southern India and Ceylon' and it is clear that the writer lived long before 1675.² We are told that he found stray colonies of Batra Sikhs in Malayalam and at Sattur met Mayadaman, grandson of Shivnath. The substantial truth of the Guru's southern tour 'must therefore be regarded as established inspite of the pilgrim's exaggerations in his account of the victuals consumed at the daily *Yagya* in the principal temple in Ceylon.'³

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, pp. v, vi.

² *Dacca Review*, 1916, p. 376.

³ *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 687, fn. 4. It is further stated that "the name given in the Sikh books is Shivnabh and not Shivnath. It is quite possible that the name was changed

After his return from Ceylon Nanak is said to have passed a few days at Talwandi and then set out again 'to pass his third retired life in the northern region.' This time he was accompanied by Hassu, a smith and Sihan, a calico-printer. 'In this retired life he was eating the fruits and blossoms of the Akk-tree, but in a dried state. On his feet he had a skin and on his head also, his whole body was wrapped up. On his forehead he had a Tilak of saffron.' He went direct to Kashmir where he humbled the Pandit Brahm Das in such signal manner that many people became his followers. The Guru then proceeded further towards the north and 'having passed a lakh and a quarter of mountains he ascended Sumeru, where the residence of Mahadev was.' There Nanak is said to have come across an assembly of Sidhs. After the usual enquiries as to who he was and how he could come there the Sidhs asked Nanak how things were going on in the earth below. In reply Nanak said that "the moon of truth was completely enshrouded in the darkness of ignorance. Sin had devoured the world, religion was crying in distress. The Jogis had given up the pursuit of knowledge and were engaged in besmearing their bodies with ashes. The Sidhs had taken their place in the mountain, there was none to deliver the world. Without the true Guru the whole world was drowned in ignorance." Thereupon the Sidhs attempted

on purpose and the Sikh books give it correctly as known at Jaffna. Another explanation is that Shivrabh in Persian character was misread as Shivrath by early chroniclers. Even in Gurumukhi Shivrabh is apt to be misread as Shivrath, the letters *b* and *th* being so alike."

to overwhelm Nanak by working a miracle but he stood the ordeal successfully and at last the Sidhs became convinced of the genuineness of the Guru's mission.¹ As Trumpp says, the Guru's visit to mount Sumeru and his discussion with Sidhs 'belong of course to the realm of fiction.'

Hereafter Nanak is said to have started towards the west and visited Mekka and Baghdad among other places. We are told that this time 'on his feet he had shoes of leather and trousers of leather ; on his neck he had a necklace of bones, on his forehead a Tilak of a dot, his clothes were blue.' From the *Janamsākhī* it appears that on this occasion Guru Nanak travelled alone but Bhai Gurdas says that he was accompanied by his old attendant Mardana.² It is said that on reaching Mekka the Guru lay down to sleep stretching his feet in the direction of the Kaaba. On being admonished by the Kazi the Guru is reported to have said " Turn my feet in a direction in which God is not." Thereupon 'the Kazi Rukn Din turned the feet of the Baba round, but in whatever direction he turned the feet of the Baba, to that direction the face of the Mihrab was also turning.'³ At this the Kazi was astonished and fell down at Nanak's feet. Macauliffe says that 'some understand this in a spiritual sense, and say it means

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār I*, 28-31.

² Mardana is mentioned in connection with the Guru's visit to Baghdad (*Wār I*, 35) and therefore he seems to have been with Nanak throughout his western tour.

³ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xli ; 'Mihrab' is the arched niche in a mosque, the front of which is always directed towards Mekka. (*Ibid*, f. n. 2.)

that Guru Nanak made all Mekka turn to his teaching.' ¹ But leaving aside the miracle, it seems that what the Guru meant was that the fact of the 'God's house' being situated in a particular direction did not exclude the possibility of His being present in the other directions as well, for 'God is everywhere contained.' Whatever that might be, it seems probable that the Guru then retraced his steps and came to Baghdad. The old record does not mention this visit to Baghdad but we have it in Bhai Gurdas ² and the recent discovery, already referred to, has placed it beyond dispute. However unacceptable the details might be, the main fact of the Guru's journey to the west must now be regarded as definitely established, though we are not quite sure that it is yet safe to say that 'while returning from Arabia Guru Nanak left a sangat of Mohamedan converts to Sikhism in Mesopotamia!'

We have already seen that this incident must have happened about 1520 and it seems that the Guru immediately returned to the Punjab and began an intensive propaganda, travelling through the province, almost district by district. The Sikh records, no doubt, say that having defeated the whole world in controversy the Guru made the wheel of the *Name* to revolve ³ and that wherever he went he converted thousands to his way of thinking, but it can be easily seen that very little had been done as yet by Guru Nanak in the way of building up a solid body of

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 175.

² Bhai Gurdas, *Wār* I, 35, 36.

³ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār* I, 37.

followers. This work he now seems to have taken up in earnest and the *Janamsākhīs* state that the Guru first went to the country of Patan¹ and had another interview with Shaikh Brahm, the incumbent of the shrine of Shaikh Farid. The details of the interview are, as usual in such cases, very probably later settings and need not detain us. Next we follow the Guru through Depalpur, Kanganpur, Kasur and Patti to a village on the site of the present Goindwal where he cured a leper who became a votary of the *Name*. Nanak then travelled through Sultanpur, Vairawal, and Jalalabad and came to a place called Kiria (Kari Pathandi in the Amritsar district),² where he is said to have made many Pathan converts. Continuing his journey the Guru passed through Batala in the Gurdaspur district and arrived at Sayyidpur just on the eve of the capture of that city by the troops of Babur in 1524. That the Guru was near about the scene appears from his own compositions but the *Janamsākhīs* develop the theme further and introduce us to a personal interview between Nanak and Babur. It is said that the Guru and Mardana were imprisoned and placed under the charge of Mir Khan, an officer of Babur's army. Like the other prisoners these two were also condemned to do manual work but when Mir Khan found that the work entrusted to them was being smoothly performed without any effort on their part³

¹ Pak Pattan, the modern name of Ajodhan.

² Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p. 108.

³ "The Guru was condemned to carry loads on his head, and Mardana to do the work of a groom. Mir Khan saw that the Guru's bundle was raised a cubit over his head without any apparent support, and that the horse entrusted to Mardana followed him while he played

he became astonished and reported the matter to Babur. "The emperor replied that, if he had known the city contained such holy men, he would not have destroyed it" and then came on a visit to the Guru, with the usual result that he became convinced of Nanak's greatness and fell down at his feet. Suffice it to say that though a meeting between Nanak and Babur 'is not impossible, it is not very probable,'¹ and we would forthwith proceed to trace the rest of the Guru's adventures. It appears that from Sayyidpur the Guru went to Pasur and thence to Sialkot and finally came to Mithankot, in the present district of Dera Ghazi Khan, where the celebrated saint Mian Mitha had his abode. We are given a long discourse at the end of which 'Mian Mitha got up and kissed the Guru's feet.' Nanak then left Mithankot and, going along the bank of the river Ravi, came to Lahore, where he is said to have converted a Khatri millionaire named Duni Chand. Then the Guru proceeded to the north-west and finally took up his residence at a spot on the bank of the Ravi. A millionaire, who from a detractor had gradually turned into a great admirer of the Guru, founded a village there which came to be known as Kartarpur.

This brings us to the last aspect of the career of Guru Nanak. From this point his life seems to turn sacred music on his rebeck." It is also stated that the Guru had been given a hand-mill for grinding corn and it was found that the mill revolved of its own accord. See Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 111, 113.

¹ There appears to have been a strong tradition that Nanak had something to do with Babur. Bhai Gurdas refers to this (*Wār* XXVI, 21) and Mohsin Fani speaks of a report that 'Nanak, being dissatisfied with the Afghans, called the Moghuls into the country' (*Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 249).

in a new direction and it appears that henceforward he busied himself in the work of consolidation. Bhai Gurdas states that after his adventures in the west the Guru caused the glory of the *Name* to spread far and wide and coming to Kartarpur he finally gave up his *Udāsī* style. Nanak again wore the garb of a householder and took up his seat on the manji.¹ His family also appears to have joined him here² and thus it seems that the Guru now gave a practical demonstration of what he had asked of his followers, *viz.*, 'to abide pure amidst the impurities of the world.'³ Of the Guru's life at Kartarpur we get several hints in the Sikh records. Bhai Gurdas says that the people there were continuously engaged in dissertations on truth and knowledge, the Sodar and the Arati were sung and in the early morning there were devotional songs. Indeed, the whole atmosphere resounded with the glory of the *Name*.⁴ Apparently on the basis of the later works Macauliffe gives a more systematic account. "At Kartarpur, a watch before day, the Japji and the Asa ki War were repeated. Then followed reading and expounding of the Guru's hymns, until a watch and quarter after sunrise. This was succeeded by singing and the reading of the Arati. After this, breakfast was served. In the third watch there was again singing, after which in the evening the Sodar was read. Then the Sikhs all dined together. The repast

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār I*, 38.

² *Ibid*; Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xliii; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 135.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 61.

⁴ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār I*, 38.

ended with further singing. After a watch of night had elapsed the Sohila was read, and every one then retired."¹ It thus appears that a Sikh society was already in the making and its divine services, more or less, clearly formulated. Guru Nanak had not remained satisfied by merely pointing out to his followers that singing the *Name* with true devotion was the very best of religious practices but attempted to give them something definite.

A notable incident during this part of the Guru's life was his visit to Achal Batala.² On the occasion of the Shivrati festival a large fair was held there and people from different directions assembled at the place. The Guru availed himself of the opportunity to preach his doctrines but he seems to have met with very serious opposition from a Jogī named Bhangarnath. The Jogī is said to have asked the Guru why he had given up his hermit's dress and had worn ordinary clothes. The Guru retorted that though Bhangarnath had given up the life of a householder he still went to the houses of family men to beg for alms. The Jogī abandoned his ground and abruptly asked the Guru to work a miracle whereupon Nanak replied that besides the *True Name* he had no other miracle.³ Here at

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I. p. 136.

² Achal, about three miles from Batala, contains the shrine of Samkartik, son of Shiv. See Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 157, f. n. 2.

³ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār* I, 39-43. *bāḥu saccā nām de hor karāmāt asāthe nāhī*. It is to be noticed that there is nothing here about the *Sangat* as has been suggested in the *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 1. Macauliffe also apparently bases his account of the incident (Vol. I, pp. 157-58) primarily on the same source but we do not understand why in spite of the clear testimony of

last we get a glimpse of the real Nanak, the man fighting the mighty forces of ignorance and superstition with simple devotion, sincerity and truth. The only other occasion when the Guru left Kartarpur seems to have been when he paid a visit to Multan¹ and had a discourse with Pir Bahavadin, but the incident appears to be of no importance.

This practically finishes the story of Guru Nanak's earthly career. The date of the inscription at Baghdad and the fact that Guru Nanak was present near Sayyidpur at the time of the capture of that city by Babur, have led us to present the facts of his life in an altered sequence but it cannot possibly be denied that the whole thing has now become more consistent and clear. We can now divide the life of the Guru into three well-defined periods: the period of inward struggle and enlightenment, the period of travels and propagandism, and the period of consolidation. The first period ended with the resignation of his office under Daulat Khan Lodi ; during the second we find him undertaking arduous and extensive tours in the north, south, east and west, visiting the important centres of religious opinion, Hindu, Muhammadan and Buddhist, and ending his travels with a detailed tour in the Punjab ; then he settles down at Kartarpur and engages himself in consolidating his followers and propounding the essentials of his creed. It is thus no longer necessary to face the difficulty that after having settled down at Kartarpur and actually begun the

Bhai Gurdas that it occurred after the Guru's return from Mecca he places it just after his return from Ceylon.

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār* I, 44-45 ; Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xliv.

important work of consolidation the Guru again left it and set out on travels to such distant countries as Ceylon and Arabia.

However, at last the Guru saw that his end was approaching and appointed Angad to be his successor. The original name of the new Guru was Lahina, he was a Khatri by caste and a resident of the village of Khadur. This was the man whom Guru Nanak now entrusted with the charge of continuing his mission after his death. 'Nanak put five Paisa before Guru Angad and fell down at his feet; this became then known among his retinue.' After the initiation of Lahina to the Guruship in this manner, a dispute is said to have arisen between the Hindus and the Musalmans as regards the disposal of Guru Nanak's body. The Hindus wanted to burn it, while the Musalmans were in favour of a burial. Then Guru Nanak said, "Put Ye flowers on both sides, on the right side put those of the Hindus and on the left those of the Musalmans. If the flowers of the Hindus will remain green to-morrow then they will burn me ; and if the flowers of the Musalmans will remain green, then they shall bury me." The Guru next asked his followers to recite God's praises. As these songs were going on, Nanak fell asleep and his body was covered with a sheet. When next day the sheet was removed the flowers of both the parties were found green but there was nothing else. The body had disappeared.¹

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xlv.

An almost similar tradition is current about Kabir ; see Wilson's *Religious Sects of the Hindus*, p. 74. It is also given with a slight variation in the *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 191.

The story may be absurd but nevertheless it testifies to the wide tolerance that characterised the teachings of Nanak. The sweetness of his character and the simple truth behind his teachings made him an object of love to all and even today he is remembered as :

“Guru Nānak Shāh Fakir
Hindu kā Guru, Musalmān kā Pir.”

CHAPTER IV

THE MESSAGE OF GURU NANAK

Guru Nanak began his career as a teacher of men with the significant utterance that 'there is no Hindu and no Musalman.' The expression may no doubt be taken to mean, as has been done by Pincott,¹ that the Guru was hereby taking his stand on the eternal unity of humanity and that he was in reality saying that everybody was primarily a 'man,' and a Hindu or a Musalman afterwards ; or, in other words, that here we have what may be called the gospel of the universal brotherhood of mankind. In the hymns and compositions of Guru Nanak such sentiments are by no means rare. Says Nanak, 'Regard all men as equal since God's light is contained in the heart of each.'² We are told :

" Castes are folly, names are folly ;

All creatures have one shelter, that of God." ³

And thus one might not be wrong if one took the expression in the abstract and said that Guru Nanak was preaching the gospel of universal brotherhood. Nevertheless, we would understand Guru Nanak's message better if we take his first significant utterance in a more concrete sense. Macauliffe says that 'the Sikhs interpret

¹ Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 589.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 332.

³ *Ibid*, p. 278.

this to mean generally that both Hindus and Muham-madans had forgotten the precepts of their religions.' ¹ Considering the circumstances the Guru was called upon to face, it seems that the expression has to be taken more as a criticism than as a constructive pronouncement, as an assertion more negative than positive in its import. As Teja Singh says, "Guru Nanak saw that the real difficulty in making the people truly religious was not so much their want of religious spirit as the very peculiar turn of their mind, with which they would take those things as *ends* in themselves which were originally intended only as means." ² He, therefore, began by launching an immediate attack on the blind conventionalism of his age and telling his contemporaries point-blank that there was no true Hindu and no true Musalman.

It has been seen that the age of Guru Nanak was an age of ignorance and an age of strife, and we may say at once that the message of Nanak was a message of truth and a message of peace. The positive side of Guru Nanak's teaching is simplicity itself. The True Lord is one, 'the primal, the pure, without beginning, the indestructible, the same in every age,' and He could only be reached by truth and sincere devotion. Singing the *Name* was the very best of religious practices; indeed, without the spiritual condition that is obtained by a repetition of the *Name*, there is no salvation.³ And it is solemnly laid down that it was only by submitting to the Guru that the wandering of the

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 37.

² Teja Singh, *The Japji* (second edition), p. 2.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. I, p. 276.

heart was restrained. 'Men could not be saved by themselves, it was idle to say so.' But it was too much to expect that such a creed could be accorded an immediate acceptance. A good deal of spade-work was necessary before people could be made to comprehend its virtues, the field had to be cleared and made ready before the seeds of truth could be sown. Guru Nanak's message may thus be regarded to have been presented in a twofold aspect: he had first to make clear what religion was not, before he could hope to make people understand what it was. And in his very first utterance the Guru went straight into the heart of the matter.

The trouble lay, as we have seen, in a confusion of the means with the end, in a too ready pursuit of the form in utter disregard of the spirit. It was this empty formalism which Guru Nanak attacked when he said that there was no Hindu and no Musalman. On being called upon to explain what he meant, the Guru is reported to have told the Kazi:

"To be a Musalman is difficult ; if one be really so, then one may be called a Musalman.

Let one first love the religion of saints, and put aside pride and pelf as the file removeth rust.

Let him accept the religion of his pilots, and dismiss anxiety regarding death or life;

Let him heartily obey the will of God, worship the Creator and efface himself—

When he is kind to all men, then Nanak, shall he indeed be a Musalman." ¹

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 38.

The Koran, the Kaaba, the rosary, fasting and prayers, were all unavailing without the essential condition of surrender to God, for 'he is a Musalman who effaceth himself.' Nanak says, 'if thou make good works the creed thou repeatest, thou shalt be a Musalman.' Indeed, "worldliness and hypocrisy, the profession of religion and secret vice, sensual indulgence combined with the Hindu ascetic's long hair and ashes smeared upon his person, the Mohammedan judge telling his beads and taking bribes, these are lashed with unsparing scorn." The Sikh records give us many indications how the Gurus had to encounter very serious opposition in their work of propaganda and reform from the followers of Goraknath, generally styled Jogis, who appear to have had several strongholds in the Punjab and its vicinity. The struggle became inevitable when Guru Nanak openly declared :

"This is not the age, there is no longer acquaintance with Jog ; this is not the way of truth.

The holy places in the world have fallen ; the world is thus ruined.

In this Kal age God's name is the best thing." ¹

This was, indeed, sufficiently serious but the matter was made more unpleasant for the Jogis when the Guru said :

"He who effaceth wrath, avarice, and greed ;

Who quencheth the fire of the five evil passions within his heart ;

Who day and night flieth the kite

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 84.

By which divine knowledge is produced and evil inclinations depart :

Who cherisheth holiness, restraineth his evil passions

And repeateth no spell but the Guru's—

The habits of that good man are the best—

Nanak saith, these are the marks of a Jogi.” ¹

And it must have passed beyond the bounds of endurance when the Guru further advised them thus :

“Meditate, O Jogi, on the Guru's instructions.

Consider weal and woe, union and separation of friends as the same.

Make the protection of God and the Guru earrings for thy heart.” ²

In short, the Jogīs were told plainly that a few external marks of holiness could not make them what they pretended to be, and that a staff, an earring, and a body besmeared with ashes were but poor substitutes for the qualities of head and heart which their name imported. As the earring or staff could not make a Jogī, even so the mere *janeū* could not make a Brahman, mere names like Bairagī, Khatri or Kazi did not count for anything, for ‘names are folly’ and ‘it is the reality that is tested.’ He is a Bairagī who abandoneth desires; ³ he is a Jogī who knoweth the way to God; ⁴ he is a Kazi who turneth away men from the world; ⁵

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 161.

² *Ibid*, p. 350.

³ *Ibid*, p. 333.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 338.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 338.

he is a Brahman who knoweth God; ¹ and only he could be called a Khatri, 'who is brave in good deeds and employeth his body in charity.' ² Examples might be multiplied to show how the Guru was never tired of exposing the futility of mere forms and names without the essentials implied therein, for such empty forms and empty names inevitably meant blind conventionalism, cant and hypocrisy.

But the Guru's initial difficulties did not end here. It has already been pointed out that in his age the idea of the unity of the Godhead had practically disappeared. Avatārs and divinities, prophets and saints, pirs and dargāhs obscured the vision of men, dividing them into irreconcilable and often actively hostile groups and destroying the very bedrock of all true religious belief. In the minds of the Musalmans the Prophet had come to occupy a position almost equal to that of the Lord Himself and in practice even superior to His. Among the Hindus the worship of avatārs and divinities for centuries had practically destroyed all semblance of the unity of the Supreme Self. Herein Nanak detected one of the root causes of the ignorance and strife from which his contemporaries suffered. Indeed, it seems that in a sense religious quarrels have been the most unfortunate and unnecessary of world's tragedies. It can easily be seen that if Christians can be persuaded to think of God before Christ, and likewise the Hindus, the Muhammadans or the present-day Sikhs, much of our difficulties would automatically disappear. Guru

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 381.

² *Ibid.*

Nanak had realised this, that the unity was fundamental and eternal, and the differences only secondary and accidental. It is said that when the Guru visited Shaikh Brahm at Pak Pattan the latter asked :

“ There is one Lord and two ways;
Which shall I adopt and which reject?”

In reply Nanak said :

“ There is but one Lord and one way ;
Adopt one and reject the other,
Why should we worship a second who is born
and dieth ?

Remember the one God, Nanak, who is contained
in sea and land.” ¹

The hymns and compositions of Guru Nanak are replete with this idea of the greatness of God and the comparative insignificance of everything else. “ There are hundreds of thousands of Muhammads,” says the Guru; “ many Muhammads stand in his Court.” ² It is ridiculous to try to conceal the greatness of God by glorifying the deeds of Krishans or Rams.” ³ These before God are not even like a tiny star before the mighty sun. The Guru says :

“ Nanak humbly asserteth, God is contained in sea and land, in the upper and lower regions;

He is unseen, inscrutable, omnipotent, the kind creator.

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 102. The ‘ setting ’ may not be historically true but that does not affect our argument.

² *Ibid*, p. 121.

³ *Ibid*, p. 305.

The Merciful alone is permanent ; the whole world beside is transitory.

Call him permanent on whose head no destiny is recorded.

The heavens and the earth shall pass away; He the one God alone is permanent.”¹

Thus did Nanak strive to transcend all transitory forms and take men direct to the ultimate reality. But men's obsessions were so varied and so numerous that the lesson had to be continually hammered upon them before any appreciable impression could be made. This is important to remember, for otherwise the frequent repetition of the same idea in the hymns and compositions of Guru Nanak as well as in those of his successors may lead us to conclude hastily like Trumpp that ‘the Sikh Granth is incoherent and shallow in the extreme.’² As Macauliffe says, “It is intelligible that repetitions should be found in the sacred books of several religions, for the teachings of their prophets were orally addressed to crowds who clustered round them, and repetitions served to impress on the listeners the instruction accorded.”³

Further, the Guru had to tackle the obsessions that arose from a blind adherence to sacred texts and the unintelligent pursuit of mechanical rites. Nanak was not the man to mince matters and his onslaught was direct. ‘Ritualistic practices are of no avail,’⁴ says he. ‘The profit which is obtained from pilgrimages,

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 154.

² Trumpp, *op. cit.*, Preface, p. vii. See also, pp. cxxi, cxxii.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid*, Preface, p. xvii.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 370.

repeating the Smritis and bestowing alms all day long is obtained in one ghari by remembering the Name that conferreth greatness.”¹ The Pandit may say that ‘by reading the Veds sinful inclinations are destroyed, but the reading of the Veds is a secular occupation. Without understanding this every one shall be disgraced.’² Indeed, ‘God’s secret is not found in the Veds or books of the Musalmans,’³ and though ‘the thousands of Purans and Muhammadan books tell that in reality there is one principle’ none has discovered Him. Expressions like these might be multiplied almost indefinitely but it appears that the following verses give us in a nutshell all that we require in this connection and we need not pursue the matter further. Says the Guru :

“ Religion consisteth not in a patched coat, or in a Jogi’s staff, or in ashes smeared over the body ;

Religion consisteth not in earrings worn, or a shaven head, or in the blowing of horns,

Religion consisteth not in mere words ;

He who looketh on all men as equal is religious.

Religion consisteth not in wandering to tombs or places of cremation, or sitting in attitudes of contemplation ;

Religion consisteth not in wandering in foreign countries, or in bathing at places of pilgrimages.

Abide pure amid the impurities of the world; thus shalt thou find the way of religion.”⁴

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 117.

² *Ibid*, p. 345.

³ *Ibid*, p. 362.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 60.

The Guru thus brings us to his own view of the matter ; he makes ' purity ' a supreme test of true religious life. But this ' purity ' had little to do with outward practice, it was primarily a matter of inward devotion. Intoxicated with avarice, covetousness and pride, men become absorbed in mammon. ' The blindness of the inward eye, the lust of the world, the great illusion of moral materialism ' hide the truth from them making them impure in word and deed. Guru Nanak recognises in egotism and pride¹ the root of man's troubles. In complete forgetfulness of the eternal presence of God man believes himself to be the ' sole ' maker of his destiny, the supreme controller of his actions, his success and unsuccess, his pleasures and sorrows, and becomes enmeshed in worldly desires, paying the price of his indiscretion in sufferings through repeated births. Impurity consisted in this chronic pride, in the refusal to recognise the supremacy of God's will, in the wanton pursuit of worldly desires. And purity, therefore, meant abandonment of egotism and abandonment of desires. But how can this be attained ? Where to find the antidote to this chronic disease ? Nanak says, in the *Word*, in the Guru's instruction, in the support of the *Name*. ' Efface thyself, what other art is there? ' ² says the Guru. ' The pious

¹ *Āsā kī Wār, Slok vii.* The word in the original is *hau* and sometimes *haumai*. Macauliffe renders them by ' pride ' which hardly gives the sense and Teja Singh's ' ego ' (*Asa di Var*, pp 75, 76) is a distinct improvement. It appears to us that by ' *hau* ' the Guru probably means that sense of false individuality which is produced by worldly attachments under the instrumentality of *Māyā*.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 77.

who meditate on God receive nectar ; it is they who are pure.' ¹ Nay, 'even the perverse who obtain divine knowledge under the Guru's instruction are pure.' ² Thus the 'purity' which Guru Nanak speaks of is hardly distinguishable from inward devotion and a recognition of the supremacy of God's will, for

" By His order man cometh ; by His order man goeth ;

Before and behind us His order prevaieth." ³

Thus we are brought to the very fundamentals of Guru Nanak's teaching. It has already been seen how the Guru attempted to dissipate the obsessions of his contemporaries by breaking through the shackles of conventionalism and proclaiming the unity and the greatness of God, making all else look insignificant in His mighty presence. The field is thus set: man is brought face to face with the Supreme Spirit. Nanak is never tired of preaching the glory and greatness of God. Self-created and self-existent, the Lord pervades everything and the whole creation moves in accordance with His will. The greatness of the Lord is beyond all human conception, His glory cannot be described. His praises, His mercy, His knowledge, His gifts, ' what He seeth and what He heareth ' cannot be ascertained. ' Nobody knoweth His limits.' It is only the True One Himself who knoweth how great He is. But the Lord, who appears to be far is yet known to be near ; ' beside Himself he made Nature, wherein He has His seat ;' indeed, ' this world

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 81.

² *Ibid*, p. 134.

³ *Ibid*, p. 78.

is the true One's house ; the true One lives in it ' and He also lives within us. In the *Āsā kī Wār* we are told :

“ Real are Thy universes, regions,
Countries, and created objects.
Real are Thy works and Thy purposes,
Thy rule and Thy administration,
Thy orders and Thy edicts,
Thy mercy and the mark of Thy acceptance.
Hundreds of thousands, millions upon millions
Call upon Thee as the true Reality.
All energies and forces are from that Reality.
Thy praise and glorification is of real worth.
Thy laws of Nature, O true King, are real.”¹

Reality is thus ascribed to the Lord's creation as well but it should be understood in a limited sense. As Teja Singh says, ‘ according to Guru Nanak, Man and Nature form one grand truth or reality, not a reality final and abiding, but a reality on account of God's presence in it. Everything in its own degree is as real as God.’² In Guru Nanak's compositions we

¹ Teja Singh, *Asa di Var, Slok II.*

² *Ibid*, p. 128. It is also said that ‘ Real ’ should be understood as “ not simply true as opposed to false, but real as opposed to imaginary, delusive, and baseless as conceived in Vedantism.” Teja Singh would have been more accurate if he had written Vedantism as interpreted by Sankara. We are also told that in presenting the double phase of the ‘ Supreme Being by combining immanence with transcendence ‘ the Gurus have avoided the pitfalls into which the people of both East and West had fallen.’ We have no concern here with what the writer says about the Semitic peoples of the West. It is said that the Aryans of the East who believed in the immanence of God were not true monotheists but were either pantheistic or polytheistic or

are, therefore, to understand *Māyā*¹ not in the sense of metaphysical unreality but rather as the producer of that sense of false individuality which makes man forget God and his real Self and induces him to set up his own in antagonism to the Supreme Will. As we have already pointed out, this was the root of man's troubles and Guru Nanak offers us his great antidote—surrender to God and the love of His Name. As 'God is self-created ; so is His Name,' and 'by obeying Him man attaineth the gate of salvation.'

at best rigid monists (pp. 123-25). We cannot but point out that these remarks are absolutely without foundation. The Sikh Gurus cannot be given any credit for originality in this respect because the dual aspect, referred to above, is clearly presented in the system of Ramanuja. As Radhakrishnan says, 'To Rāmānuja, God is both the transcendent and the immanent ground of the world' (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 686). And Ramanuja is anticipated in still earlier works. (*Cf. Gītā*, x, 42 : *viṣṭabhyāham idaṃ kṛtsnam ekāṃśena sthito jagat* ; *Kaṭha*, iv, 9 : *ekastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā rūpaṃ rūpaṃ pratirūpo bahiṣca*.) Indeed, it would serve no useful purpose to forget that the Sikh Gurus were simple men whose strength lay not in the originality of their philosophical conceptions but rather in that innate wisdom and charm of personality that compel respect. For most of their ideas the Sikh Gurus, like the other teachers of the Medieval school, were indebted to the great Vaishnava philosopher Ramanuja, whose theistic idealism was the fountain that fed the *Bhakti* movement. The speciality of Sikhism did not consist in the novelty of its ideas but rather, as we have said before, in that unique spirit of organisation that made it so definite in its practical results.

¹ "Maya is that by which man forgets God, a false attachment is produced in him, and he begins to love something else in the place of Godr." *Ānand*, III, 29 : quoted by Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, p. 137. As we have indicated above, *Māyā* produces that "hau" which is the root of all men's troubles.

The glory of the *Name*¹ and the merit of singing it are also as enthusiastically and solemnly proclaimed as the glory and greatness of God. The Guru says:

“ By hearing the Name truth, contentment, and divine knowledge are obtained.

Hearing the Name is equal to bathing at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage.

By hearing the Name and reading it man obtaineth honour.

By hearing the Name the mind is composed and fixed on God.

Nanak, the saints are ever happy.

By hearing the Name sorrow and sin are no more.”²

Pilgrimages, austerities, reading the sacred books, ritualistic practices and thousand other devices of the kind were all unavailing without the *Name*. Indeed, those who forget the *Name* are the falsest of the false and ever wander in transmigration. Salvation is for those who are immersed in the ambrosial nectar of the *Name* and walk in the path of obedience. We are told:

“ By obeying Him man's path is not obstructed ;

By obeying Him man departeth with honour and distinction ;

¹ As Teja Singh points out, the word ‘ Name ’ bears various meanings. Sometimes it is used for God Himself; sometimes in the sense of ‘ God as revealed ’ and it also bears a third sense, ‘ the word as recorded in the Holy Scripture ’ (*Asa di Var*, pp. 126-27). In studying the message of Guru Nanak we might as well take it in the sense of ‘ the Word as revealed through the Guru.’

² *Japji*, X : Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 200-201.

By obeying Him man proceedeth in ecstasy on his way ;

By obeying Him man formeth an alliance with virtue—

So pure is God's name—

Whoever obeyeth God knoweth the pleasure of it in his own heart.”¹

Thus the two essential requisites for a pure and virtuous life are the love of the *Name* and obedience to God, by which we should possibly understand ‘ the attuning of the individual to the Supreme Will.’

But this is not all. It is emphatically laid down that a man can never be imbued with a true love of the *Name* and a spirit of surrender without the Guru's instruction. Unequivocally Guru Nanak states :

“ None has realised God without the true Guru ; without the true Guru, none.

God has placed Himself in the true Guru, and has manifested and declared Himself through him.”²

The True One, the Formless was incomprehensible and He could only be attained by faith and love. But how shall the love of the *Name* be instilled into one's mind ? Nanak says, the Guru will show the way :

“ Under the Guru's instruction God's word is heard ; under the Guru's instruction its knowledge is acquired ; under the Guru's instruction man learns that God is everywhere contained.”³ Through the

¹ *Japjī*, XIV : Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 202.

Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, VI, pp. 74, 75.

Japjī, V. Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. I, p. 198.

Guru's instruction it is known that God is in the heart ¹ and men become absorbed in the love of the *Name*. How to scale the fortress without a ladder ? ' The Guru giving me God's name is my ladder, my boat and my raft.' ² How to cross over this fearful ocean of the world, which has no shore or limit, no boat, no raft, no pole and no boatman ? ' The Guru has a vessel for the terrible ocean, and ferrieth over him on whom he looketh with favour.' ³ There could thus be no salvation without the Guru ; ' without a religious guide man would run riot in evil and haste to perdition.' ⁴

But the question still remains, how could the Guru be found ? The answer is immediate :

“ Only that man finds peace, who meets the true
Guru,
And enshrines the Name of God in his heart ;
And that too, Nanak, if God sends him Grace.” ⁵

The spiritual regeneration of man is thus made initially dependent on Divine pleasure. Here we have an echo of the old *Upaniṣadic* saying, ' only he gains Him whom the Self chooses for Himself.' ⁶ Like the doctrines of the unity of the Supreme Self and the indispensableness of the Guru this idea of Divine grace is also repeatedly stressed by Guru Nanak. ' The

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 297.

² *Ibid*, p. 262.

³ *Ibid*, p. 270.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 296.

⁵ Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, IX, p. 82.

⁶ *Kaṭha*, II. 23.

greatness of the Name is bestowed according to Thy pleasure, O God,'¹ says he. 'The worshippers on whom God bestoweth kindness worship Him,' and 'by the Guru's instruction to his disciples this knowledge is obtained that the kind One saveth those on whom He looketh with favour.'² This theory of Grace introduces us to that implicit contradiction which we find broadcast in Guru Nanak's compositions. "The hymns of Nanak, like those of Kabir, contain two distinct currents, which frequently flow on side by side like the Rhone and the Saone, and hardly mingle." The dual aspect of the Supreme Self, as it is found in the Guru's compositions, has already been referred to. "He is the Absolute, raised above all differentiation, of whom nothing can be predicated, because he is eternal and immutable, without attributes (*nirguna*). But he is also the immanent God of the visible world, Maker of all beings, as fully contained in the ant as in the elephant, dowered with all the qualities of his boundless creation (*sarva-guna*)."³ Besides, there is that contradiction between what may be called free will and predestination, between man as the maker of his destiny and man as a helpless instrument in the hands of Fate. On the one hand, we are told that 'as man soweth so shall he reap.' Man's life is as his acts constrain him and each person is responsible himself for his actions, and shall have to settle his account himself. Men shall be judged according to their acts; an account of every *ghari* and moment shall be taken, and

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 20.

² *Ibid*, pp. 57, 58.

³ Estlin Carpenter, *ibid*, p. 435.

the soul shall obtain punishment or reward.¹ 'Here is an ethical demand, strictly encompassing the raptures of religious ecstasy, which recognised a sphere of independent action, and set up man as the maker of his own fate.' And the point is further emphasised by a description of the terrible fate that would await all sinners after death.² 'As sesame is heated and pressed, or cotton carded by means of a thong, so shall sinners be punished,' says the Guru. But, on the other hand, it is definitely laid down that 'what pleaseth God shall happen, there is nothing whatever in the power of His creatures.' Such destiny shall attend man as God's pen has recorded upon his forehead, and if it please God man crosses the terrible ocean, if it please Him he is drowned therein. 'It is the God Himself who acteth, no one else acteth.' The kind One saves those on whom He looks with favour and the holy have thus good fortunes written on their foreheads.³ Here then we have an entirely different approach in which man appears helpless in the hands of inexorable Fate, receiving his share of preordained pleasure or pain. Carpenter says that "the implicit contradiction is partially solved by the incorporation of the moral order as realised by the Law of the Deed in in the Divine Will."⁴ But this hardly goes to the root of the matter for it still leaves uncertain whether man is an entirely free agent so far as his actions are concerned. Another explanation may possibly be that

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 70, 90, 124, 133, 244.

² *Ibid*, p. 125.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 58, 66, 87, 100, 145.

⁴ Estlin Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 487.

there is really no contradiction in Guru Nanak's utterances and that what appears to be such is due to the fact that these words were addressed in different times to different persons in different stages of spiritual development.¹ However, it appears to us that in practice the problem was solved in a more effective manner. Guru Nanak asks of his disciple a total surrender to the Guru, a resignation of his own wisdom so that he might be saved by the superior wisdom of the Guru. Thus it is evident that as soon as an individual came under the protection of the Guru, the contradiction, referred to above, disappeared so far as he was concerned, because henceforward the Guru alone acted, the disciple having no separate will apart from that of the former. His sole business was to walk in the path laid down by the Guru and carry out his wishes in implicit obedience.

This gives us in outline the main elements of the message of Guru Nanak. Three things stand out pre-eminently: The One True Lord, the Guru, and the Name. Salvation lay in the *Word* of God and the *Word* could only be known under the Guru's instruction. "Without the Guru all is darkness ; without the Word nothing can be known,"² says Nanak. The Guru is thus the main link in the chain, the pivot on which everything else hinges. And the importance of this will become more and more evident as we trace the development of Sikhism through its various stages. But there is another aspect of the matter which requires

¹ This explanation has been suggested to me by my Gurumukhi teacher, Bhai Ajmer Singh.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p, 135.

immediate attention. From what has been said above it may well appear that Guru Nanak was a revolutionary who aimed at upsetting the cherished institutions of the society in which he was born, bringing about a social cataclysm and building a new order on the ruins of the old. It may seem that he had denounced in turn almost all the important usages and institutions that he found in vogue and that he had asked his contemporaries to follow a new path in absolute indifference to all past traditions and practices. Avatars and divinities, pilgrimages and ritualistic practices, the caste system and its usages were all swept aside and the religious observances on which Jogīs, Sidhs and others like them prided themselves were thrown against their faces as so many heaps of dust. In short, one might be inclined to think that Guru Nanak was not a reformer who wanted to remove the abuses that had crept into the old order and set it right by restating it in terms of newer environments but that his object was to cut himself adrift from the old moorings and set up an independent path by itself. If we have understood him aright, this seems to be the view of Macauliffe and there can be little doubt that the trend of modern Sikh opinion also lies in that direction. There indeed can be no question that Sikhism gradually developed on certain distinctive lines and at last stood clearly differentiated from the older creeds but the point with which we are at present concerned is—how are we to understand its start? A close study of the question has convinced us that an immediate answer is no easy matter and that several important facts have got to be explained and

accounted for before one could accept the views of modern writers like Macauliffe and Bhai Kahn Singh.¹

We would begin with the important question, the most important of all, *viz.*, the caste-system which formed the steel frame of the society in which Guru Nanak was born. The trend of modern opinion is that Nanak attempted its total abolition. Macauliffe is inclined to think that the Guru attacked the caste-system most vehemently and most successfully and Carpenter says that 'Nanak broke down caste restrictions in every direction.' Bhai Kahn Singh and Teja Singh also appear to be emphatic in their opinion that the Guru had no mercy for caste and its usages. This sweeping conclusion is based primarily on certain remarks of Guru Nanak about caste and its various obligations that we find in his hymns and compositions. But it appears to us that this sort of evidence should always be taken with a good deal of caution. In the first place, it should be remembered that the context is, in most cases, irrecoverably lost, the 'settings' attempted in the *Janam-sākhīs* being almost wholly unacceptable; secondly, the remarks themselves are not always consistent; and lastly, they often contradict indisputable facts. Indeed, it seems to us that their true import has not unoften

¹ In his well-known treatise, *Ham Hindu Nahin*, Bhai Kahn Singh seeks to establish that the Sikhs are not Hindus. It should be clearly understood that we have no concern with that question here. There cannot be any doubt that Sikhism gradually developed on certain distinctive lines of its own and particularly after the reformation by Guru Gobind Singh the Sikhs have stood clearly differentiated from every other community. But we are not so sure of the rise of Sikhism and its earlier days.

been misunderstood. A few examples, we hope, would make our position absolutely clear.

Vitally connected with the question of caste is the custom of wearing the sacred thread. Bhai Kahn Singh and others of his way of thinking would have us believe that Guru Nanak sought to abolish the custom altogether. The sole evidence on which the Bhai relies is that well known *Slok* on the sacred thread that is found in the *Āsā kī Wār*. It runs thus :

“ Out of the cotton of mercy make threads of temperateness, and twisting them with Righteous Zeal tie in them the knot of continence.

The sacred thread thus formed will be for the soul,
If thou hast it, O Pundit, put it on me.

It will not break, or get soiled, or be burnt or lost.

Blessed is the man, O Nanak, who goes about with such a thread on his neck.

Thy thread is bought for four pies, and is put on in an outlined place.

With instructions whispered in the ear that the Brahmin has become the guru.

When the man dies, the thread falls off, and he goes away threadless.” ²

The *Janamsākhīs* state that when Nanak was nine years old his father Kalu made arrangements for investing him with the sacred thread and that the Guru uttered this *Slok* in remonstrance to the Pandit when the latter was just going to put the thread on his

¹ *Ham Hindu Nahin*, p. 87 ; *Gurumat Prabhākar*, p. 402.

² Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, pp. 98, 99.

neck.¹ There can be no doubt that this is a later setting and we would, therefore, turn immediately to the *Slok* itself. Now, apart from this dubious context, what does this *Slok* by itself prove? Does it indicate that Guru Nanak wanted to do away with the custom of wearing sacred threads or is it a homily addressed to a Pandit who considered the wearing of the sacred thread by itself a ground of religious excellence? Now, on another occasion the Guru says :

“They are not to be called pure who wash their bodies and sit at leisure.

Rather are they pure, Nanak, who enshrine the Lord in their hearts.”²

Can this verse be taken to mean that the Guru is here attacking the practice of washing and bathing? If the answer be in the negative, we would be hardly entitled to take the previous *Slok* as a diatribe against the custom of wearing sacred threads. And again, to come to a more pointed illustration, in a hymn in *Rāg Āsā* the Guru says :

“There is only one kitchen of the Lord and none other.

No other kitchen can work, nor can it remain long in the world,

The giver himself is merciful and the whole universe is at play,

He alone is competent to give and feed all.

He has given soul, life, body, wealth, flavours and delicious victuals. We ourselves cannot do anything, the Lord has preordained all,

¹ *Nānak Prakās*, Part I, ix ; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 16, 17.

² *Āsā kī Wār*, *Slok* XVII.

The Lord at the head of all is one, the Sidhs and Sadhs are helpless,

O Nanak, all are applicants, whereas the giver is the only one, the Creator."

It is said that this was the Guru's answer when Rai Bular offered him three wells for the maintenance of a public kitchen.¹ Whatever that might be, it is certain that this hymn cannot be taken to mean that the Guru was hereby rejecting the practice of maintaining *Langars* or free public kitchens, for we definitely know that in the earlier days of Sikhism the *Langar* was one of the most characteristic of its institutions. Indeed, it seems clear to us that in every one of these instances the Guru was warning the listeners against their persistent habit of confusing the means with the end by pointing out to them the limited utility of such practices as the wearing of the sacred thread, bathing and washing, or the maintenance of a public kitchen. Teja Singh thinks that the sacred thread was only a symbol of exclusiveness² but when rightly understood it was a constant memento to its wearer of the traditions of the family in which he was born and of the natural proclivities of the blood that was in him. What the Guru said was that it meant nothing more. He did not seek to abolish the custom of wearing the sacred thread but vigorously denounced the untenable claims advanced on the strength of the thread alone.

Indeed, if we do not take the Guru's utterances in this light several indisputable facts become difficult

¹ Khazan Singh, *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, Part II, pp. 359, 360.

² Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, p. 27.

and almost impossible of explanation. Guru Nanak was not the man to advocate one thing and practise another and if it had really been his intention to abolish the custom of wearing sacred threads it becomes difficult to understand why he himself had worn it to the last.¹ There is no evidence to show that any of his successors had given it up; on the other hand, it appears from the writings of Bhai Gur Das Bhala, quoted by Malcolm, that "the family of Govin, proud of their descent, had not laid aside the Zunnar, or holy cord, to which they were, as belonging to the Cshatriya race, entitled."² Mohsin Fani speaks of a disciple of Guru Hargobind, Sadah by name, 'who was neither gladdened by good nor afflicted by bad fortune.' The author of the *Dabistān* goes on to say, "I was once his companion on a journey from Kabul to the Punjab. The belt of my coat broke; Sadah gave me immediately his Zunnar to serve me as a belt. I said to him: 'Why do you this?' He answered: 'To tie the Zunnar purports an engagement to serve another; as often as I render some service to friends, may I resign my Zunnar for it.' " This incident must be regarded as extremely important as it practically sets the question at rest. This Sadah was a man who was every inch a true disciple of the Gurus. Mohsin Fani says that on one occasion he did not stop even to see his dying son because that might delay the execution of the mission entrusted to him by the Guru. 'I went about the Guru's business and will not

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 249.

² *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 67, 68 f. n.

return,"¹ said he. Such a man also had not given up the *janeū* but he had no fetish about it and to him it was not a symbol of caste-pride and exclusiveness. Still another incident may be mentioned to show that there had been no abolition of the custom of wearing sacred threads. It is said that on one occasion Guru Gobind Singh asked for some thread to tie up his sword-belt. Daya Singh, the first of the Guru's disciples under the new system of initiation by *pahul*, was present there and he at once tore off his *janeū* and offered it to the Guru.² It thus appears that the sacred thread had not been given up even after the introduction of Guru Gobind Singh's reforms. The argument would possibly be advanced that a time-honoured custom like this could not be made to die out so soon and that these instances are to be taken as exceptions which rather prove the rule. But it should be remembered that we come across no example of the contrary type, and when we find that Guru Nanak himself had not given it up and that possibly the sons of Guru Gobind Singh himself had worn it and also that two ideal Sikhs like Sadah and Daya Singh had it on their necks, the conclusion is irresistible that no abolition of the custom had at all been attempted. Guru Nanak had merely emphasised the limited character of its utility and denounced the perversions that it produced in proud and hypocritical minds.

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, pp. 284, 285.

² It is said that the matter did not end here. Daya Singh did not take up the sacred thread again. The matter was then reported to the Guru on which the latter remained silent, and so on (*Sūraj Prakāsh*, *Rut*, III, 28). But this sequel has nothing to do with us at present.

This gives us a new view-point and compels us to look more closely into the whole question of Guru Nanak's attitude towards the caste-system. „In the hymns and compositions of Guru Nanak there are, no doubt, several remarks which may seem, at first sight, to lead to the inevitable conclusion that the Guru wanted completely to brush it aside. On one occasion the Guru tells us :

“ What difference is there between a swan and a crane if God look kindly on the latter ?

Nanak, if it please Him, He can change a raven into a swan.” ¹

And again,

“ Castes are folly, names are folly :
All creatures have one shelter, that of God.
If a man calls himself good,
The truth shall be known, O Nanak, when his
account is accepted.” ²

In the *Āsā kī Wār* as well the Guru speaks in the same strain :

“ Man's evil becometh known, O Nanak ; the true
One seeth all.

Every one maketh endeavours, but it is only what
the Creator doeth that taketh place.

Caste hath no power in the next world : there is a
new order of beings.

They whose accounts are honoured are the good.” ³

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 278.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid*, p. 223, *Slok IX*.

Teja Singh remarks that "the Guru most effectively refutes the reason or necessity of this institution (caste) by inculcating the belief in one God who fills all beings, whether high or low, and whose light reaches down to the lowest orders of beings."¹ We are not here in any way concerned with the reason or the necessity of the caste-system but our point is whether the passages referred to above indicate in any way that Guru Nanak wanted to abolish it altogether as some modern writers would have us believe. Indeed, after what we have seen about the custom of wearing sacred threads no question of abolition can at all arise, but even if we take the above remarks by themselves all that can possibly be said is that Guru Nanak was warning his listeners that exclusive reliance on caste was absolute foolishness. It was the work and mentality that really mattered because, 'high or low caste influenceth not God when He makes any one great.' If we want to understand the attitude of Guru Nanak it seems essential that we should recognise a distinction which is very easily lost sight of, the distinction between caste and caste-pride. The Guru had no mercy for the latter. To the hypocritical and arrogant Brahman the Guru says:

" O Brahman, so meditate on God
That his name may become thy purification,
His name thy learning, and His name thy wisdom
and good acts.
The sacrificial thread is only on thy body as long
as thou hast life.

¹ Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, p. 9.

Make the remembrance of the Name thy loin-cloth
and frontal mark,

And it shall abide with thee in this world and the
next." ¹

And, as we have seen before, Jogis, Sidhs, Bairagis, Khattris, Kazis and Mullahs, all met with the same reception in his hands. He used his lash vigorously on the pride of caste and the pride of name but his remarks hardly entitle us to conclude that he wanted a total destruction of the entire social system.

In this connection much has been made of the remark of Bhai Gurdas that 'Guru Nanak had reduced the four castes into one.'² But, do the facts as we know them lend any support to a literal interpretation of this remark? Is there any evidence to show that the Sikhs were ignoring the prohibitions of caste and forming themselves into a new brotherhood in which caste-usages had no place? We would have occasion hereafter to discuss the point in detail; for the present, suffice it to say that we know of no instances of intermarriage but, on the contrary, we have definite information that marriages even between Sikhs and non-Sikhs took place when the caste-considerations were favourable.³ How are we then to interpret the remark of Bhai Gurdas? Having regard to the circumstances of the time of Guru Nanak and even that of Bhai Gurdas we are left no alternative but to take it in a figurative sense. All that Bhai

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 307.

² Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 23. *cār varan ik varan karāyā*. See *Ham Hindu Nahin*, p. 81.

³ For a further discussion of the question, see Appendix A.

Gurdas possibly meant is that Nanak had brought men belonging to all the four castes under the protection of the same true Guru and the *Name*. At any rate, his remark is not in the least conclusive regarding the attitude of Guru Nanak towards the caste-system.

In fact, there is no solid ground to contend that Guru Nanak had attempted the abolition of the caste-system. But at the same time it will not do for us to forget that the theistic teachers of the medieval school brought about a significant innovation. The Guru says :

“ No one calleth clarified butter or silk impure ;
Such is a saint in regard to caste.” ¹

Here we have almost an echo of the well-known Vaishnava saying that even an outcaste with real devotion to God is superior to the Brahman.² It has already been pointed out that the medieval *Bhakti* movement owed its inspiration and most of its ideas to the system of Ramanuja but there was a remarkable difference. The glorious and blissful freedom that Ramanuja proclaimed to be the goal of man's spiritual endeavours had been reserved by him to the Twice-born of the first three castes. “ Not for the Çudra is the grace of God available in this life. By dutiful conduct he may work his way up to another birth in which he may be admitted to the study of the Vedas which is indispensable for the saving knowledge.” ³

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 120.

² The original in Sanskrit is “ Caṇḍālo'pi dvijaśreṣṭhaḥ Hari-bhakti-parāyaṇaḥ.”

³ Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

This barrier was now broken through and the secret of the *Name* thrown open to all persons, irrespective of birth. But, as Carpenter points out, even in this respect the way had already been prepared by the doctrine of *prapatti* or surrender to God. 'Those who felt themselves helpless might seek the advice of a preceptor and resign themselves to the heavenly will,' and this path was open to all, irrespective of caste or colour or creed.¹ This doctrine was now given a more general and extended application and took the form of surrender to God and the Guru, and the love of the *Name*. And the historical reasons for this are not difficult to seek out. The political ascendancy of Islam and its vigorous proselytism had shaken the Hindu society to its very foundations. The reaction, in its first phase, resulted in a strengthening of the forces of conventionalism and scripturalism but the futility of the attempt became soon evident. It became necessary to put forward an ideal, simple yet manly, popular yet vigorous, suitable to the masses yet unsuitable to none. Speaking historically, this was what teachers like Chaitanya or Nanak sought to achieve. But the new ideal grew out of the old, it was a development and

Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 416. Radhakrishnan says, 'Prapatti is complete resignation to God, and is, according to the Bhāgavatas, the most effective means for gaining salvation. It is open to all, the learned as well as the ignorant, the high as well as the low, while the path of bhakti, involving as it does jñāna and karma, is confined to the three upper classes.' We are further told that while according to the northern school prapatti is one way of reaching the goal and not the only way, the southern school, which follows more closely the tradition of the Ālvārs, holds that prapatti is the only way to salvation (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 705, 706). There can be no doubt that the medieval teachers, in that respect, agree with the southern school.

not a new departure. Guru Nanak had not attempted a destruction of the old order but a reformation to suit the growing needs of the time.

Indeed, if we do not take Guru Nanak in this light it becomes difficult to understand his message. Leaving aside the question of caste for the present, we would try to illustrate the point by taking up an apparently more simple matter, *viz.*, Guru Nanak's attitude towards such customs as pilgrimages, ritualistic observances and the like. The writers, referred to above, have absolutely no doubt that the Guru had no mercy for such futile practices and that he had asked his followers to eschew them altogether.¹ It is undoubtedly true that in the Guru's hymns and compositions we come across many remarks that would seem to support this conclusion.² On one occasion the Guru pointedly observes :

“ Let Jogis practise Jog, let gluttons practise gluttony,

Let penitents practise penance, and rub and bathe themselves at places of pilgrimages ;

But let me listen to thy songs, O Beloved, if any will sit and sing them to me.”³

These are strong words and one cannot be blamed if one thinks that the Guru was hereby advocating an unqualified rejection of these practices. But is there anything intrinsically wrong in such practices as pilgrimages, penance or charity ? Are we to believe

¹ *Ham Hindu Nahin*, pp. 165-174 ; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. xxi.

² *Supra*, pp. 101, 102.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 10.

that a man like Guru Nanak had denounced such virtues as mercy, alms-giving and self-restraint? If not, we are bound to seek a different explanation of his attitude and fortunately there are enough indications in his own sayings for such an explanation. In the *Japji* the Guru says:

“ Pilgrimage, austerities, mercy, and alms-giving
on general and special occasions

Whosoever performeth, may obtain some little
honour ;

But he who heareth and obeyeth and loveth God in
his heart,

Shall wash off his impurity in the place of pilgrim-
age within him.” ¹

Here again it is clear that Guru Nanak was laying stress on the limited utility of these practices and the superiority of true inward devotion. We may even go further and say that without the latter the former were of no avail. The Guru had possibly this in mind when he said:

“ Burnt offerings, sacred feasts, and the reading of
the Purans,

If pleasing to God, are acceptable.” ²

The meaning obviously is that these things by themselves were of no value and that they could be helpful only when they were performed in a true spirit of devotion. In his satire on the Jains the Guru

¹ *Japji*, XXI. We have preferred Macauliffe's to Teja Singh's translation (*The Japji*, p. 36). It is not necessary, however, to discuss the respective merits of the two renderings because even if Teja Singh's interpretation be correct, the argument is not vitiated.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 28.

says that 'the gods appointed the sixty-eight places of pilgrimages, and holy days were fixed accordingly by their orders,' and he ridicules the Jains because they were granted no access to these places of pilgrimage. They are further censured because they had no sacrificial marks on their foreheads and 'did not give their deceased relations lamps or perform their last rites, or place anywhere barley rolls and leaves for them.' Macauliffe remarks that the Jains conformed in many ways to Hindu customs and the Guru here censures them for not being altogether consistent.¹ But this is more or less true of all sects that have arisen from within Hinduism including the followers of Guru Nanak himself and it becomes difficult to understand why the Guru should particularly select the Jains and censure them for the non-observance of certain customs which he himself regarded as of little or no consequence. In short, it seems to us that, as in the matter of the sacred thread, it is necessary that we should revise our judgment regarding Guru Nanak's attitude towards such practices as pilgrimage, penance, alms-giving and the like. The Guru says:

"The Ganges, the Jamna, the meeting of the three rivers at Tribeni, Priyag, the seven oceans,

Alms, charity, and worship are all contained in God's name. I recognise Him as the One God in every age.

Nanak, in the month of Magh, if I repeat God's name with great delight, I bathe at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage."²

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 151.

² *Ibid*, p. 144.

With this, taken as a whole, nobody need have any quarrel but from this it would be a big jump to come at once to the conclusion that the Guru was hereby denouncing pilgrimage, alms-giving, charity and worship. Indeed, it cannot be too strongly insisted that the evidence of the Guru's sayings and compositions should be taken with a good deal of reservation. His was the language of reaction and his persistent endeavour to hammer the fundamental truth on his listeners gives a seemingly destructive tone to his sayings which may well mislead the unwary. The point appears to us so important that we make no apology for adducing a few examples. It is stated in the *Janamsākhī* that when Guru Nanak's father Kalu represented to him that he required assistance in the cultivation of his land and asked Nanak to turn his attention to agriculture the Guru said :

“ Make thy body the field, good works the seed,
irrigate with God's name ;

Make thy heart the cultivator ; God will germinate
in thy heart, and thou shalt thus obtain the dignity of
nirvan.”

And again,

“ Make thy mind the ploughman, good acts the
cultivation, modesty the irrigating water, and thy body
the field to till,

The Name the seed, contentment the harrow, and
the garb of humanity thy fence :

By the work of love the seed will germinate ; thou
mayest behold happy the homes of persons who thus
act.”

It is said that Kalu then wanted his son to take up the occupation of a shopkeeper and the Guru replied :

“Make the knowledge that life is frail thy shop,
the true name thy stock-in-trade ;

Make meditation and contemplation thy piles of
vessels ; put the true Name into them.

Deal with the dealers of the true Name and thou
shalt gladly take home thy profits.”

Nanak was next asked to take up the occupation of a merchant and to deal in horses but he replied in the same strain :

“ Make thy hearing of thy sacred books thy merchandise, truth the horses thou takest to sell ;

Tie up virtues as thy travelling expenses, and think not in thy heart of tomorrow.”

At last in despair Kalu asked him to take government service, whereupon the Guru remarked :

“ Make attention thy service, faith in the name thine occupation ;

Make the restraint of evil thine effort, so shall men congratulate thee.” ¹

The story of the conversation between the father and the son may or may not be true but we are here concerned with the verses alone. It is clear that these utterances can, in no way, lead to the conclusion that the Guru was hereby denouncing the professions of cultivation, shop-keeping, trade or government service. Similarly, when the Guru says :

“ Make kindness thy mosque, sincerity thy prayer-carpet, what is just and lawful thy Quran,

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 21-2”

Modesty thy circumcision, civility thy fasting, so shalt thou be a Musalman ;

Make right conduct thy Kaaba, truth thy spiritual guide, good works thy creed and thy prayer,

The will of God thy rosary, and God will preserve thine honour, O Nanak,"¹

we would be hardly justified in thinking that Nanak is attacking Islam and rejecting its institutions and practices. Again, when the Brahman is told :

" Make the remembrance of the Name thy loin-cloth and frontal mark,

And it shall abide with thee in this world and the next.

Search for nothing but the true Name;

Make God's love thy worship, the burning of the love of wealth *thine incense*.

Look only on the one God, search for none other."²

we must not hastily conclude that the Guru is here denouncing the Brahman, the loin-cloth and the frontal mark. And this gives us a viewpoint which has got to be consistently applied if we wish to understand Guru Nanak aright. As we have said more than once, Nanak was primarily concerned in dispelling the illusion that arose from a confusion of the means with the end and his criticism of the means was concrete and not abstract. He had nothing to say against charity, penance, or pilgrimage as such but denounced them as he found them in actual practice. He attacked the perversions, not the customs themselves. When the Guru says, " the more one wandereth on pilgrimages, the more one

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 88.

babbleth,"¹ his criticism is directed more towards the man than the practice itself.

And further, it is admitted on all hands that Guru Amar Das had undertaken a pilgrimage to Kurkhetar, the Jamna and the Ganges. It is stated in the *Sūraj Prakās*, a work written nearly three hundred years after the event, that this was done in accordance with the advice of Emperor Akbar and that the object was to divert the wrath of the Hindus. This story may very well be of doubtful authenticity;² in fact, Bhai Kahn Singh ignores it altogether and takes his stand on entirely different grounds. In the first place it is stated in Jetha's account of the pilgrimage, which is incorporated in the *Granth Sāhib*, that 'the true Guru made the toil of pilgrimage in order to save all people,' and Bhai Kahn Singh remarks that the Guru's object in undertaking the journey was to preach the truth and thereby dispel ignorance. Secondly, attention is drawn to the fact that the Guru did nowhere perform the customary rites and consequently his was not a pilgrimage in the ordinary sense.³ But there is another instance which Bhai Kahn Singh ignores and to which this explanation does not seem to apply. Guru Tegh Bahadur had also visited various places of pilgrimage and we are told by no less an authority than Guru Gobind Singh himself that when he came to Prayag, 'he passed

¹ *Ibid*, p. 307.

² But it is important to note that the remission of the pilgrim-tax on the Guru and his party establishes a connection of the Emperor with the Guru's pilgrimage.

³ Kahn Singh, *Ham Hindu Nahin*, pp. 172-73.

his days in charity and other meritorious acts.' ¹ The conclusion is obvious. Guru Tegh Bahadur at least had no prejudice about certain formalities which, in the opinion of several modern writers, had been denounced and abolished by Guru Nanak.

We venture to hope that the foregoing remarks have made at least this much clear that the question in hand is a complicated one and that any conclusion based solely on the utterances and compositions of Guru Nanak may very well be misleading. There are, however, several matters where, in addition to the Guru's own remarks, the history of Sikhism as well points invariably to only one possible conclusion: we may take, for instance, the question of Nanak's attitude towards avatārs and divinities and sacred texts like the Veds and the Koran. It has already been pointed out that one of Guru Nanak's constant themes was the glory and greatness of the One True Lord and the comparative insignificance of everything else ; he was never tired of harping on the idea of the unity of the Godhead and his language is always strong and sometimes even violent. And there cannot be any doubt that Sikhism enjoined the worship of the One True Lord alone. Similarly, with regard to the sacred texts as well, the fact cannot possibly be disputed that Sikhism grew independently of these and that it recognised the authority of none but its own Gurus. The conclusion, therefore, seems obvious that in these matters at least Guru Nanak's attitude was

¹ *Bacitra Nāṭak*, VIII, i. In Macauliffe's translation it is written that the 'Guru bathed at various places of pilgrimage' (Vol. V, p. 303) but there is nothing in the original about bathing. It runs thus :

jab hī jāṭ tribeṇī bhā'e,

punndān din karat bitā'e.

destructive. But several considerations lead us to think that even this cannot be regarded as final ; here, as well, a qualification is necessary.

It is not difficult, even in this connection, to develop an argument on previous lines. But leaving that alone, we would concentrate our attention on one significant fact which appears to us more or less decisive. Besides the compositions of the first five Gurus and the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur together with a verse of Guru Gobind Singh which were added afterwards, the *Granth Sāhib* also contains hymns of several *Bhagats* or saints of various orders. Of these, Jaidev was indisputably a worshipper of Kṛṣṇa, Namdev adored the same deity as Vitthal, Ramananda worshipped Viṣṇu as Ramechandra, and Pipa, Sain and Rav Das were the latter's disciples.¹ Macauliffe is of opinion that probably the intention of Guru Arjan in incorporating the hymns of these saints was to enable the readers of the *Granth Sāhib* to follow the historical development of the Sikh reformation, 'for otherwise he could not have included in his compilation hymns quite opposed to the principles and tenets of his predecessors.'² But this is reading modern ideas in the mind of Guru Arjan and we are simply unable to accept this explanation. What was the *Granth Sāhib* ? It was the very embodiment of the Gurus, the incorporated *Word*, truth as revealed, 'even the Guru choosing for himself a seat lower than that of the Scripture.'³ Is it conceivable that Guru Arjan had

¹ Kabir has been purposely omitted because the current view is that he, too, had denounced avatārs and divinities.

² Macauliffe, *ibid*, Preface, p. xxxii.

³ Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, p. 19.

incorporated in such a work writings which were opposed to the principles that he advocated ? The conclusion must be that there is nothing in these hymns which is opposed to the principles and tenets of Sikhism, as Guru Arjan understood them.

Indeed, it seems probable that Macauliffe himself realised the difficulty of his position, for, further on, he remarks that 'the Hindu Bhagats for the most part began life as worshippers of idols, but by study and contemplation arrived at a system of monotheism which was appreciated by Guru Arjan.'¹ Again, speaking of the hymns of Namdev that are found in the *Granth Sāhib*, Macauliffe says that 'they belong to three periods of his life—boyhood when he was an idolater, manhood when he was emancipating himself from Hindu superstitions, and old age when his hymns became conformable to the ideas of religious reformers at the time, and to the subsequent teaching of the Sikh Gurus. It is on account of his later and more matured opinions that his writings have been incorporated in the sacred book of the Sikhs.'² Although we think that this division is uncalled for and that there is a fundamental unity in the hymns taken as a whole which Macauliffe fails to perceive, we would content ourselves by pointing out that even this does not clear the position. Guru Arjan might clearly have stopped with the hymns of the third variety and he need not have gone out of his way to incorporate others, which, in the opinion of Macauliffe, are definitely antagonistic to the fundamental tenets of Sikhism. There

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 1.

² *Ibid*, p. 40.

can thus be little doubt that we have got to seek a different explanation for the fact in question. And that seems simple enough if we could only, for a moment, lay aside our preconceptions and relax our attention to details. With his lofty spiritualism Guru Arjan had no difficulty in perceiving that the main thing that mattered was sincerity of purpose, earnest devotion and the spirit of surrender, and he had catholicity enough to appreciate these qualities wherever he found them. It is the selfsame spirit that made Chaitanya "as devout in a temple of Çiva as in one of Viṣṇu. Whatever form or emblem had acquired sanctity served to remind him of the object of his love. This was not the result of a crude Pantheism. It was the recognition of the value conferred by the devotion of others on objects which had aided them (however incongruous they might seem) to approach the Deity." ¹ The parallel is not exact for, in the first instance, it is the devotion itself that matters, whereas in the second we are concerned with the objects of devotion. But the spirit is the same. Guru Arjan asked his Sikhs to worship and to sing the praises of the One True Lord alone but, at the same time, he taught them to respect earnest devotion and the spirit of surrender, irrespective of the object of adoration. This would explain why he incorporated in the *Granth Sāhib* several hymns which, at first sight, seem opposed to the most vital tenet of Sikhism. Thus the worship of the avatārs and divinities were not entirely valueless if it could be performed in the right spirit of devotion and surrender.

¹ Estlin Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

But at the same time it must be distinctly understood that the hymns of Guru Nanak as well as those of his successors lend absolutely no support to the theory of incarnation. It may not be improbable that the statement of Mohsin Fani, whose remarks are almost always refreshing, gives us a clue to the real attitude of Guru Nanak in this respect: "Nanak praised the religion of the Musalmans, as well as the Avatars and the divinities of the Hindus ; but he knew that these objects of veneration were created and not creators, and he denied their real descent from heaven." ¹ In fact, Guru Nanak does not deny the missions of prophets and holy persons. On one occasion we are told that many such came into the world, started many religions, served the one Lord who is the God of all and departed after playing their respective parts.² And, as regards the divinities, we should not forget that Guru Nanak does not reject them altogether. In the *Japji* we are told:

"One Maya in union with God gave birth to three acceptable children.

One of them is creator, the second the provider, the third performeth the function of destroyer."

This is the Hindu Trinity *in toto* ; but, at the same time, the Guru makes it clear that these are no independent agencies because 'as it pleaseth God, He directeth them by His orders.'³ Again, in emphasising the glory of the *Name* and recounting the profits

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, pp. 248, 249.

² Khazan Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

³ *Japji*, XXX.

that one could obtain by its repetition, the Guru says that 'by hearing the Name man becometh as Shiv, Brahma, and Indar.'¹ It thus appears that what Guru Nanak did was to place the divinities in their proper positions in relation to the One Supreme Lord ; his attack is directed not towards the divinities themselves but rather to those who allowed them to obscure the vision of the Lord and worshipped them exclusively in utter ignorance or disregard of the True One Himself.

And it appears to us that with regard to the sacred texts as well, the position is not dissimilar. So far as Guru Nanak is concerned Bhai Kahn Singh quotes only one verse from his hymns to support his theory that the Guru had rejected the sacred books.² A few others might possibly be added³ but, apart from the defective nature of the evidence furnished by them, it is so difficult to reconcile them with several explicit utterances of the Guru on the matter that we have little doubt that their true import have been misunderstood. In the *Japji* the Guru says :

"Men have grown weary at last of searching for God's limits ; the Veds say one thing, that God has no limit.

The thousands of Purans and Muhammadan books tell that in reality there is but one principle.

If God can be described by writing, then describe Him ; but such description is impossible."⁴

¹ *Japji*, IX. In both the instances we have followed Macauliffe's translation. Teja Singh's renderings are different and give, in each case, a considerably altered sense and they are hardly borne out by the original. See Appendix B.

² *Ham Hindu Nahin*, p. 60. ³ *Supra*, p. 102 ⁴ *Japji*, XXII.

This is a position which none need dispute, and if this be construed into an attack on the sacred books it should be remembered that the criticism would apply with equal force to the *Granth Sāhib* as well. In the *Sodar* we read :

“ The Pandits and the Supreme Rikhis, reading their Veds, sing Thee in every age.

The jewels created by Thee with the sixty-eight places of Hindu pilgrimage sing Thee.” ¹

And in the *Āsā kī Wār* we have what seems like a justification of the Veds.² Indeed, in one place the Guru distinctly says :

“ The four books and the four Veds, which were promulgated in the world,

Came down from high under the orders of the Lord God.” ³

Further, it is important to note that the Guru asked his father to make the reading of sacred books his merchandise and he advised Mian Mitha thus :

“ Act according to the Quran and thy sacred books.” ⁴ Utterances like these are difficult to reconcile with the theory that Guru Nanak had advised a wholesale rejection of the sacred books. But we think that the apparent inconsistencies would automatically disappear if we could once

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 250, 251.

² *Slok XIII.*

³ Khazan Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

⁴ Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. I, pp. 23, 123.

realise the difference between an attack on Scripturalism and one on the Scriptures themselves. Guru Nanak had no mercy for men who had no real devotion and piety but still prided on their knowledge of the sacred texts, for those who considered the reading of those texts by itself a greatly meritorious act. Such persons were told plainly that 'the reading of the Veds was a secular occupation.' It does not seem improbable that the following verse of Kabir, which is found in the *Granth Sāhib*, gives us a clue to the real attitude of Nanak in this respect :

“ What availeth thee to read the Veds and Purans ?
It is like loading a donkey with sandal whose
perfume he valueth not.” ¹

Again, it is significant that Bhai Gurdas attributes, partially at least, the ignorance and superstition prevalent in the world on the eve of Guru Nanak's advent to the fact that the people had forgotten the Veds. Thus, the perversity was there not because of the Veds but rather owing to the fact that the Veds had ceased to function. Further, the same author remarks that the Veds are 'the warehouse of the Guru' which enables a man to cross the ocean of worldly desires, but they could not be understood without the true Guru.³ This is

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 247.

² *Wār*, I, 21.

³ *Ibid*, I, 17. For 'warehouse of the Guru' we have in the original 'guru haṭ.' The meaning probably is that the Veds were the storehouse of the Guru's instruction. It should, however, be noted that in I, 25, Bhai Gurdas writes in a somewhat different strain, for he says that nothing about 'love' is found in the Veds.

in effect what Kabir tells us in the following verse :

“ The words of the sacred texts are as seas of milk ;
For that ocean let the Guru be churning-staff.” ¹

It thus appears that the theory of the rejection of the sacred texts is by no means so obvious. On the other hand, it seems that Guru Nanak had merely pointed out the inutility of relying on scriptures without the saving grace of devotion and piety. Again, to speak in the words of Kabir :

“ Say not that the Hindu and Musalman books are false ; false is he who reflecteth not on them.” ²

And to this we might add that false are those who parade their knowledge of the sacred texts without understanding their spirit, who confuse learning with wisdom, and who, in their hypocrisy and arrogance, prefer blind scripturalism to devotion and piety. As the Guru himself says :

“ A man may load carts with books ; he may load men with books to take with him ;

Books may be put on boats ; pits may be filled with them.

A man may read books for months ; he may read them for years ;

He may read them for life ; he may read them while he hath breath—

Nanak, only one word, God's name, would be of account ; all else would be the senseless discussion of pride.” ³

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 219. ² *Ibid*, p. 277.

³ *Āsā kī Wār, Śloṅ IX* ; Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. I, p. 229.

Here again, it is not difficult to understand that the Guru's objective is the man and not the books themselves.

And the fact, that in the subsequent development of Sikhism the sacred books played little or no part, is easy to explain. So long as the appeal had been, more or less, to the intelligentsia the old texts had sufficed. Only re-interpretations had been necessary from time to time and Sanskrit was adequate to serve as the medium. But the advent of Islam had changed the whole situation ; the masses had now to be taken into confidence and the teaching administered in a language intelligible to them. This was why the teachers of the medieval *bhakti* school took up the Vernaculars as the medium of their instruction and propaganda. It is interesting to note that the contemporary political movement of our country provides us with an instructive parallel. Herein as well, so long as the intelligentsia alone were concerned, English had conveniently served the purposes of political agitation but, as the movement filtered down and reached the masses, the question of a *lingua franca*, other than English, has come prominently to the forefront. Thus, the circumstances pressed the Vernacular in, and its use by Guru Nanak does not by itself prove anything regarding his attitude towards the old Sanskrit texts.

We thus find it extremely difficult to follow the lead of the writers referred to above. It appears that there is no satisfactory evidence to contend that Guru Nanak denounced almost everything that he had found in existence and that it was his object to build an

entirely novel structure on the ruins of the old. On the contrary, the materials at our command lead us to think that he left almost everything alone and that it was his primary concern to provide his contemporaries with a new viewpoint and a detachment which would enable them to understand the relative value of things in matters religious and to distinguish the fundamental from the secondary. In fact, it has been made sufficiently clear that the message of Guru Nanak's hymns can never be understood aright unless they are approached in an altered perspective. The apparent inconsistencies would then automatically disappear and we would begin to appreciate the true significance of the Guru's utterances. How else, for instance, are we to explain a hymn like the following ?—

“ The demigods in order to behold Thee, O God,
made pilgrimages in suffering and hunger.

Jogis and Jatis go their own ways, and don ochre-coloured garbs.

For Thy sake, O my Lord, the darweshes are imbued with love.

Thy names are various, Thy forms are various, the number of Thy merits cannot be told.

Men leaving houses and homes, palaces, elephants and horses go abroad.

Priests, prophets, holy and sincere men leave the world to obtain salvation.

They abandon good living, rest, happiness, and dainties;

They doff clothes, and wear skins.

Imbued with Thy name they in anguish and pain become darweshes at Thy gate.

They don skins, carry begging bowls, staves, and wear hair-tufts, sacrificial threads, and loin-cloths.”¹

We make no apology for having quoted this hymn *in extenso* because it appears to us that it is, more or less, decisive and practically sets the question at rest. It will be seen that here the Guru makes it perfectly clear that Jogīs and Jatis going their own ways; priests, prophets, holy and sincere men who become *udāsīs* in order to obtain salvation; and persons practising austerities of various kinds, may ‘become darweshes in God’s gate’ if they are imbued with the love of the *Name*; and that the wearing of ochre-coloured robes, loin-cloths, sacrificial threads, or hair-tufts: the abandonment of worldly life, and the carrying of begging bowls and staves are not, in any way, inconsistent with true devotion and piety. In short, the Guru says that the thing that really mattered was sincere devotion: without it all else were fruitless, and very often became impediments to spiritual progress. But where devotion was earnest and sincere, everything changed its colour and even impediments became useful auxiliaries. Guru Nanak had realised the truth, but it was not a truth that cut its way aloft in supreme indifference to all around: it was rather that which revitalised everything by its magic touch and encompassed all in one wide synthetic sweep.

Sikhism, no doubt, had its start in a protest but it was a protest against conventionalism and not against Hinduism. In Nanak, perhaps, the reaction

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 93, 94.

reached its limits and thus gave a poignant tone to many of his utterances which at first sight give the impression that his was a destructive and revolutionary ideal. But there is no satisfactory evidence to show that he intended to overturn the social order. At the same time, it should be noted that he was not a reformer of the modern type who wants to improve matters by piecemeal reformation, taking the abuses one after another. He had realised that the ignorance and strife from which his contemporaries suffered was due primarily to the fact that form had supplanted spirit. This was what he sought to remedy and he went straight into the heart of the disease, leaving the symptoms to take care of themselves. He knew that if people could be persuaded to regard things in the right spirit all that were unmeaning and unhealthy would automatically disappear; and the senseless disputes that troubled society were also bound to lose much of their venom and bitterness if men could be convinced that all that they were quarrelling for were, after all, immaterial. It is an admitted fact that in the medieval *bhakti* movement the supreme impulse of 'love' dominated everything else but, unfortunately, its implications have not unoften been misunderstood. It has been rather too readily taken for granted that as 'love' implied equality the main assault of the movement was directed against the caste-system. But as we have seen, at least so far as Guru Nanak is concerned, facts speak otherwise. He had the vision to perceive that any unnecessary attack on time-honoured institutions and practices would only intensify the prevailing bitterness and

strife and thus defeat his own object of extending the spirit of equality and fellowship. We must not forget that 'love' also implies toleration and that it can synthesise without destruction. The message of 'love' need not necessarily be one of uniformity ; it may as well be that of unity in diversity. This is how we have understood the teaching of Guru Nanak. He was out not to kill but to heal, not to destroy but to conserve ¹ However, it was idle to expect that all would accept his diagnosis or his remedy and a new order consisting of the followers of Guru Nanak gradually came into being. How that came about is the enquiry that we intend to pursue in the following pages.

¹ This is a subject which can hardly be treated adequately in a single chapter. There are some other aspects of it which we have not brought under review for want of space ; for instance, we may mention the very interesting questions that are raised by the following statement of Carpenter : " The movement of Nanak, which culminated in the formation of a kind of church nation, was fed from two sources, and attempted to establish a religion combining the higher elements of Hinduism and Islam alike " (*op. cit.*, p. 489). Our treatment of Nanak's message will show that this is a view with which we can hardly agree. However, for the present, we leave the discussion out as we intend to return to the whole question in a separate monograph.

CHAPTER V

THE FOUNDATION OF THE SIKH PANTH

The nomination of Angad to the Guruship is a fact of the profoundest significance in Sikh history. When Guru Nanak had stressed the indispensableness of the 'Guru' he was making no new departure, because this had been recognised by almost all the teachers of the medieval school. But the really vital moment came when he appointed a successor. As Trumpp says, 'the disciples of Nanak would no doubt have soon dispersed, and gradually disappeared, as well as the disciples of many other Gurus before Nanak, if he had not taken care to appoint a successor before his death.'¹ Whatever might have been the object of Nanak, whether he intended to found a separate path of his own, or whether, as Narang says, 'it was simply to leaven the social and religious thought of the Hindus, and to improve the general tone of their moral and spiritual life,'² it is clear that under the circumstances some sort of a cleavage was inevitable. It can be readily believed that Guru Nanak's propaganda had given many of his contemporaries a rude awakening but at the same time it should not be forgotten that the number of those who had come, directly or indirectly, under the Guru's influence and accepted his teachings must have been insignificant in

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxvii.

² Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

comparison with those who had not ; and if Nanak's message was not to prove a cry in the wilderness it was essential that his followers should unite and fight for the principles that their Master had preached. Looked at from this standpoint the nomination of Angad was a matter of supreme importance as it placed the movement under the guidance and control of a definite and indisputable leadership and gave it a distinctive turn at the very outset of its career.

As we have tried to show before, Guru Nanak had practically left the details to take care of themselves and had concerned himself more or less with the fundamentals. In fact, there had been very little of direct innovations, at least so far as social usages were concerned, and as yet there was not much to distinguish the followers of Nanak from the general Hindu mass. It is no doubt true that the Guru had clearly pointed out the uselessness of mere formalities and observances when they are divorced from the spirit that should animate them, but this was not enough and the supreme need of the moment was to clothe the Guru's message with some distinctive emblems which might give it an individuality of its own. Moreover, certain peculiar characteristics of Hinduism made such a course all the more imperative. It is important to remember that Hinduism has no cut-and-dried creed and that it never prescribes the same mode of worship for everybody. Broadly speaking, *adhikāra* or aptitude has always been regarded as a factor in the prescription of Hindu religious duties and opinions have generally been tolerated almost to any extent provided certain social usages were not wantonly violated. Under the circumstances

it was not at all difficult for Hinduism to accommodate the followers of Nanak within its folds and absorb them totally in time. As the acutely infective period of a religious movement does not last long and as, in the large majority of cases, the form has a tendency to get the better of the spirit, it is quite conceivable that Guru Nanak's efforts might easily have been dissipated. 'In order that the influences started by Nanak might continue to work, it was essential that those influences should be perpetuated,' and paradoxical as it may seem, new forms forged in order that the spirit might not disappear. The appointment of Guru Angad to the Guruship was the first great step in that direction and others were soon to follow.

Guru Angad or Lahina, as he was called before his nomination to the Guruship, was a Khatri of the Tihun¹ clan and was born in A.D. 1504. His father Pheru who was a trader by profession lived in the village of Matte di Sarai but later on removed first to Harike and then to Khadur 'now a famous Sikh town in the Tarn Taran sub-collectorate of the Amritsar district.' It appears that the people of Khadur were devoted worshippers of the goddess Durga, and Lahina, who from his very boyhood was of an intensely religious

¹ The Tihuns or Trihuns belong to the Barā-Sarīn group of the Khatri (Nānak Prakās gives the name as Tihān, Part II, xlvii, 3). The Bedi, the Tihun, the Bhalla and the Sodhi became sanctified by the births of the various Sikh Gurus to them. Nanak was a Bedi, Amar Das a Bhalla, and Ram Das and his successors, Sodhi. 'In each case the section, as a whole, appears to have acquired a sacred character by the birth of the Guru within it, and it is not merely his descendants who possess that character.' (*Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, p. 512.)

temperament, 'organised a yearly pilgrimage of devout Hindus to Jawalamukhi, a place sacred to Durga in the lower Himalayas, where fire issues from the mountains.'¹ But Lahina's religious life suddenly took a new turn when one day he heard a voice that stirred the innermost depths of his being. There was a Sikh at Khadur whose practice it was to recite the hymns of Guru Nanak and it was this that Lahina had heard. The Sikh told him all about Guru Nanak who lived at Kartarpur on the bank of the Ravi and at whose feet he had obtained peace and contentment. Lahina's mind was soon made up and he determined to pay a visit to the Guru at the earliest opportunity. At the time of the next annual pilgrimage to Jawalamukhi Lahina visited Guru Nanak on the way and was so overwhelmingly impressed by the latter's personality and the charm of his discourses that he parted company with his villagers and stayed on with the Guru. In due time he got initiation and soon became the most devoted of the Guru's followers.

All authorities agree that Lahina was of the very essence of obedience and of his career as a disciple of Nanak prior to his nomination to his Guruship we know little else. The various incidents narrated in the *Janamsākhīs* are all calculated to show the depth of Lahina's devotion and the implicit character of his surrender to Nanak. Indeed, the Guru is reported to have said, "Thou hast performed excessive devotions. Between thee and me there is now no difference. None of my Sikhs hath such faith and confidence in me as thou, and therefore I love thee most of all. Thou

¹ *Nānak Prakās*, xlvii, 12, 13; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 1.

art verily Angad a part of my body. I congratulate thee.”¹ It is no wonder, therefore, that when Guru Nanak, in various ways, tested the devotion of the Sikhs Lahina alone could stand the trial and he finally obtained the Guruship ‘as a reward of devotion and service.’

It can be easily surmised that Angad’s nomination to the Guruship was not likely to be looked upon with favour by Nanak’s family at Kartarpur and one of the first acts of the second Guru was to remove his seat to Khadur. In fact, the Coronation Ode distinctly states that the sons of Guru Nanak did not obey his words and had become rebels,² so it was idle to expect that they would now give their allegiance to their father’s nominee. We are also told that almost immediately after his removal to Khadur Guru Angad kept himself concealed in a room in the outskirts of the village. The room was locked upon him and his whereabouts were known only to a Jat girl, named Nihali, who brought him a pot of milk every day. The Guru remained in this manner for six months till at last his retreat was disclosed to the Sikhs through the supernatural knowledge of Bhai Budha. As we shall see later on, a similar story has been current about Guru Amar Das as well. It is said that when Angad’s son Datu attempted to usurp the Guru’s office, Amar Das retired to a secret retreat in his native village and in this instance as well it was Bhai Budha who found out the Guru’s retreat. If these stories have any factual basis it seems probable that the object of these

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 9.

² *Tilke di Wār*, II, Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 26.

temporary retirements might as well have been the same in both cases. On the analogy of the case of Amar Das we may surmise that Guru Angad's object in thus resorting to a secret retreat was possibly to test the devotion of the Sikhs and incidentally bring home to the sons of Guru Nanak the futility of disputing their father's decision.

Whatever that might be, Guru Angad soon resumed his proper place among his followers and the Sikh chronicles undeniably give the impression that he worked unswervingly in the path chalked out by his Master. The details, however, are more or less legendary and do not offer us much on which we can build a framework of sober history. There are the usual stories of the Guru's disputations with Jogis and Tapās or penitents, the point of which all seems to lie in Guru Angad's strict adherence to the simplicity of his Master's teachings and his ceaseless efforts, by precept and example, to keep his spirit alive.¹ There is again the very doubtful story of Humayun's visit to the Guru after his defeat at Kanauj² and there are others of a more or less apocryphal character. But one incident there is which is extremely interesting and at the same time important because to it, perhaps, we owe the *Tikka di Wār* or the Coronation Ode, which throws such a flood of light on many points of early Sikh history. We are told that the two minstrels of Guru Angad, Satta and Balwand, suddenly took it into their heads that all the Guru's glory was really due to their own skill as musicians and in their conceit attempted to bring home

¹ *Sūraj Prakāś, Rās I, xxi-xxiii.*

² *Ibid, Rās I, x. 29-63.*

to the Guru the sense of their indispensableness by keeping away for some time. In spite of the Guru's requests to attend the *Sangat* they persisted in their attitude of defiance and at last Angad finished with them and made his own arrangement. The two minstrels soon realised the folly of their action and made repeated attempts to get reconciled with the Guru. But Angad refused to relent because the minstrels, in their arrogance, had not spared even the memory of Guru Nanak. They had suggested that even the latter's court would not have been known without the music of Mardana. Guru Angad refused to entertain any further representation on behalf of the minstrels and declared that "he would have the beard and moustaches of any man who again spoke in their favour cut off and his face blackened, and he would have him mounted on a donkey and led in disgrace through the city." In their extremity Satta and Balwand went to Bhai Ladha of Lahore, who possessed great influence with the Guru. Bhai Ladha took up their cause and "having shaved his head, blackened his face, and mounted a donkey with his face turned to the tail, went round the city of Khadur, and finally arrived in the Guru's presence." Being asked as to what he meant by this extraordinary guise Bhai Ladha said that he was merely obeying the Guru's order and prayed for the reinstatement of the minstrels. The Guru could not refuse and the minstrels were sent for. They arrived and fell down at the Guru's feet. They are then said to have composed and sung the well-known Coronation Ode, which, with subsequent additions, was incorporated in the *Granth Sāhib* by

Guru Arjan. But even of this incident there are different versions and some state that the whole of the Coronation Ode was composed during the days of Guru Arjan.¹

It is thus clear that the details of Guru Angad's pontificate are generally vague and uncertain and we are given the impression that it was more or less uneventful. But it was not unimportant. On the contrary, we can trace here the first signs of those developments that gradually marked the Sikhs out as a distinct community by themselves. In spite of the unsatisfactory character of the Sikh records it is possible to trace one or two notable developments that took place under the auspices of Guru Angad. Of these undoubtedly the most important was the invention of the Gurumukhi alphabet, which the Sikh chronicles unanimously attribute to Guru Angad.²

¹ Santokh Singh places the entire incident in the pontificate of Guru Arjan (*Sūraj Prakās*, Rās. 111, xliii-xlv). Bhai Gurdas also lends some support to the *Sūraj Prakās* : he makes Bhai Ladha parupkārī live in the time of Guru Arjan (*Wār*, xi. 25.). Macauliffe says ' It does not, however, follow that Bhai Ladha did not live in the time of Guru Angad also. The statement that the circumstance occurred in the time of Guru Arjan is totally negatived by the internal evidence of the composition itself, if it be carefully examined. It was written by the minstrel Balwand to make his peace with Guru Angad. Satta afterwards, as we shall see, added three pañris to it in the time of Guru Arjan when the apotheosis of the Guru had become complete ' (Vol. II, p. 24 f. n.). It may be pointed out, however, that Bhai Budha lived up to the days of Guru Hargobind but Bhai Gurdas does not place him in the days of any of Nanak's successors and, as regards the internal evidence of the composition itself, there may be room for difference of opinion.

² Bhai Gyan Singh, *Panth Prakās*, p. 65 ; the *Tawārikh Guru Khālsā* gives the exact date (Sambat 1597, Baisakh sudi panchmi) on which the invention was made (p. 294).

But this claim has been disputed by more than one writer on grounds that would seem insuperable. It has been pointed out that in *Rāg Āsā* of the *Granth* is found the *patti* or the thirty-five verses by Guru Nanak, each beginning with a letter of the alphabet. 'The letters are exactly the same 35, as are now found in the Gurumukhi Alphabet even including the letter (ṛ) which is peculiar to Gurumukhi, thus proving that the Gurumukhi Alphabet existed before his time and was not invented by the second Guru, Angad, though the name Gurumukhi may have replaced its original name.' ¹ The *Sikhan di Rāj di Bikhīā* seeks to evade this difficulty by suggesting that the *patti* in question was the composition of Guru Angad ² but as the verse occurs in *Mahala I*, which is the place assigned to the compositions of Guru Nanak, there can be no doubt that the compilers of the *Granth* took it to be of Nanak. Besides, there are other difficulties. Trumpp says, "Guru Angad was altogether unlettered and could himself neither read nor write. The later tradition, which makes him the inventor of the Gurumukhi letters, is therefore without any foundation." In fact, B. Gurbuksh goes so far as to suggest that "the tradition that the second Guru invented the Gurumukhi alphabet is based on a misreading of the spurious book called the *Janamsakhi* of Bhai Bala. Guru Angad only secured the *Janampatri* or horoscope of Guru Nanak from his uncle Lalu." ³ However, this last suggestion seems hardly acceptable.

¹ *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I. p. 677, f. n. 1.

² Court's Translation, p. 13.

³ *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 681, f. n. 1.

We ourselves think that the story of the *Janampatrī* might very well have led to the story of the *Janam-sākhī* but that it was responsible for the tradition about the invention of the alphabet is certainly far-fetched. And we have shown elsewhere that Trumpp's contention that Guru Angad could neither read nor write does not follow from the passage on which he relies.¹ But the *patti* seems really insuperable. In fact, Macauliffe gives up the claim of 'invention' and says that 'Guru Angad, deeming that the compositions of Guru Nanak were worthy of a special written character of their own, adopted and modified a Panjabi alphabet, called Gurumukhi, to give expression to what fell from the Guru's lips.' And he also gives a hymn which he found in an ancient manuscript at Khadur and which is said to have been composed on the occasion of the adoption of the new character.² It should be noticed that the tradition that Guru Angad was the originator of the Gurumukhi characters is very strong and we think that the difficulty about the *patti* also considerably disappears if we take the view that Guru Angad 'modified and adopted' a script already in existence. This is really what Grierson suggests. "The true alphabet of the Punjab is known as the *Laṇḍā* or 'clipped.' It is connected with the *Mahājanī* character of Northern India, and resembles it in having a very imperfect system of vowel sounds. Vowel sounds are frequently omitted. It is said that in the time of Angad, the second Sikh Guru (1538-1552) this *Laṇḍā* was the only alphabet employed

¹ *Supra*, p. 59, f. n. 2.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 56-57.

in the Punjab for writing the Vernacular. Angad found that Sikh hymns written in Landa were liable to be misread, and he accordingly improved it by borrowing signs from the Devanagari alphabet (then only used for Sanskrit manuscripts) and by polishing up the forms of the letters, so as to make them fit for recording the scriptures of the Sikh religion. Having been invented by him this character became known as the Gurumukhi, or the alphabet proceeding from the mouth of the Guru. Ever since this alphabet has been employed for writing the Sikh scriptures, and its use has widely spread, mainly among the members of that sect." ¹ Indeed, it is certain that the question cannot be dismissed so lightly as Trumpp and B. Gurbaksh have done. A tradition cannot be ignored simply because it is a tradition, when we have nothing positive against it. The only difficulty, that of the *patti*, can be explained on the very reasonable supposition that it had originally been composed by Guru Nanak in the Landa script and that it was subsequently transliterated into Gurumukhi with necessary emendations. It is important to remember that Guru Angad had not invented any entirely new script but had merely 'adopted and modified' one already existing, and given it a characteristically Sikh name together with the seal of religious sanctity.

If this view of the matter is correct, and we have little doubt that it is, it must be said that it was a very remarkable achievement. As Narang points out, "The very name of the new script reminded those who employed it, of their duty towards their Guru,

¹ *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. IX, Part I, p. 624.

and constantly kept alive in their minds the consciousness that they were something distinct from the common mass of Hinduism.' ¹ The use of the Vernacular and that too through a script which was peculiarly their own could not but deal a blow at the domination of the priestly class, whose influence mainly rested on their knowledge of Sanskrit, which had hitherto generally been the language of religion. The appeal of the hymns was certainly more direct because it came in a language which all could understand, and the new script made it doubly so because it served as a constant memento to the followers of the Guru of their distinctiveness and solidarity. Guru Angad possibly had been led to the adoption of Gurumukhi by the necessity of inscribing the hymns of his predecessor in a suitable and convenient form but he had forged a weapon which proved to be of unforeseen possibilities in a variety of other ways.

According to the later Sikh chronicles, the next great achievement of Guru Angad was the compilation of a biography of Guru Nanak. As we have shown elsewhere, there can be little doubt that this claim is entirely unfounded. But it is practically certain that the work of collecting and compiling the hymns of Guru Nanak had already commenced. Indeed, this was the reason which had led to the modification of the *Laṇḍā* into Gurumukhi. It appears that this work was earnestly continued during the days of Guru Amar Das. The latter is reported to have said that "to make a careful collection of the

¹ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

² *Supra*, p. 60.

Guru's hymns and give them to the Sikhs in God's name " was a highly meritorious act ¹ and the result of this exhortation is to be seen in the fact that when Guru Arjan conceived the plan of compiling the hymns of his predecessors and of himself in one grand volume he got the materials, at least so far as the hymns of the first three Gurus were concerned, more or less ready. Thus it appears that the credit of initiating the work that finally led to the production of the *Granth Sāhib* is also due to Guru Angad.

Lastly, we come to the characteristic Sikh institution of the *Langar* or the free kitchen. It is said that ' the system had already been set on foot by Nanak and was simply enlarged and expanded by Angad.' Guru Nanak had said that ' those who eat the fruit of their own labour and bestow something will recognise the right way ' ² and we know that presentation of offerings to the Guru was regarded as one of the most essential duties of the Sikhs. But Nanak had, at the same time, characterised offerings as ' poison which could not be digested ' and so truly had Guru Angad imbibed the spirit of his Master's teaching that he is said to have earned his living ' by twisting the coarse twine made of *munj*,' though there was no dearth of offerings from the faithful. In the earlier days of Sikhism these were wholly utilised for the maintenance of the *Langar*.³ ' The institution

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 85.

² *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 374.

³ The Coronation Ode says that Angad's wife Khivi ' distributed the Guru's wealth in his kitchen—rice boiled in milk and ghi tasting like ambrosia.' (Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 27.)

proved a powerful aid in the propaganda work.' Besides serving as an asylum for the poor it also became a great instrument for advertisement and popularity and 'it gave a definite direction to the charities of the Guru's followers.' It served as a great bond of union among the Sikhs and also helped to mitigate caste prejudices to some extent, as all those who came to have their food in the *Langar* had to take it together, irrespective of caste or creed.

It may not thus be unreasonable to say that Guru Angad 'had succeeded in giving a sort of local habitation and a name to the mission of Nanak.'¹ The need of the moment was to save the followers of Guru Nanak from 'total absorption by the Hindu mass.' A distinction had to be created in order that the prevailing apathy and ignorance might not get the better of the influences which it had been Nanak's mission to bring into being. The efforts of Guru Angad contributed considerably to this end. Besides the Guru, whose position as the sole and supreme religious leader was in itself a great source of unity and solidarity, the Sikhs had now the Guru's hymns inscribed in their own Gurumukhi and the *Langar* maintained by their joint efforts and sacrifices. They could now claim an individuality of their own, however imperfect as yet it might have been.

But the initial difficulties that beset the Sikh movement did not end here. Besides the danger of 'absorption' there was the further possibility that the followers of Nanak might gradually 'narrow down into a sect of quietists.' It is undoubtedly true that

¹ Narang, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 20.

Guru Nanak had solemnly declared the possibility of the attainment of salvation by a householder and his emphasis on the necessity of labour for the maintenance of one's own livelihood seemed for ever to preclude the possibility of any of his followers adopting the life of a recluse and preferring the silence of the forest to the hurry and bustle of worldly life. Says Nanak,

“ Better to live by honest labour than by begging ;
They who eat the fruit of their labour and bestow
something,

O Nanak, recognise the right way.”

Offerings, as we have seen, were to be regarded as poison which could not be digested. ‘When man performeth scant ceremony and dependeth on offerings the effect on him is as if he hath taken poison.’¹ Guru Nanak had clearly pointed out the advantages of domestic devotion,² and with regard to *Udās* he had said : “to make use of all things in this world and not to deem them one's own, but only God's property, and ever to possess a desire to meet Him is *Udās*.” In fact, he had pronounced the distinct injunction—“Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world, so shall you succeed.”⁴ Thus it would appear that in Nanak's system there was no room for asceticism. Yet, it is perhaps equally true that Nanak's hymns and compositions afforded sufficient materials for the

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 45.

² *Ibid*, pp. 319, 103.

³ *Ibid*, p. 106.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 60.

rise of a sect of quietists who would renounce the world and seek refuge in isolation and meditation. Nanak says:

“ Were I to become a monarch on my throne and raise an army ;

Were revenue and regal revenue mine—O Nanak, they would all be worthless.”¹

And again,

Look to truth alone and know that the world is false ;
They who think that the world is true shall die confounded.”²

Many similar expressions might be quoted which would tend to show that Nanak regarded the world as false and several aspects of his own life seemed to give further countenance to this view of his teaching. His wanton indifference to all worldly affairs from his very boyhood and his answers to his father's entreaties asking him to return home, might be made to show that after all Nanak discarded the life of a householder. Indeed, we even find in Nanak's compositions justification for a wandering life.³ There can be no doubt that Guru Nanak had clearly indicated which way his sympathies lay by appointing Angad, a householder with wife and children, to be his successor and we also know on the reliable authority of Bhai Gurdas that when the Guru finally settled down at Kartarpur he resumed his family ties, but still the fact remains that

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 80.

² *Ibid*, p. 14.

Ibid, p. 291.

by careful selection and emphasis Guru Nanak's life and writings might be made to yield an ideal of asceticism. We ought not to be surprised therefore to find that an influential body of opinion arose under the leadership of Nanak's eldest son Sri Chand, who discarded the world and sought consolation in the undisturbed meditation of the True One in the solemn silence of the forest or the hill. The *Udāsīs*, as the followers of Sri Chand were called, 'also *prima facie* possessed the same credentials and claimed the same amount of sanctity as Sikhism proper.' Besides celibacy and asceticism 'the other tenets of the sect were the same as those of Sikhism and it regarded Nanak with the same veneration as the Sikhs did.' It was thus clearly essential that the fundamental character of Sikhism was determined once for all as the whole future of the movement depended upon it. A prompt decision was all the more imperative as the Indian mind has generally put a premium on asceticism and even to this day the life of a recluse is regarded as the most honourable of all human existences. We do not know of any definite measure taken by Guru Angad to avert this danger, unless his active preaching and exposition of the hymns of Guru Nanak be so construed. It is said, however, that his successor, Guru Amar Das, authoritatively declared that "the active and domestic Sikhs were wholly separate from the passive and recluse *Udāsīs*" and thus preserved the infant faith from disappearing as one of the many sects that have arisen and vanished within the fold of Hinduism.¹⁷

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 50; Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 22; *Glossary of*

The result of this separation from the *Udāsīs* was to give to the Sikhs 'something of a social character in addition to the religious ties that held them together.' The followers of Guru Nanak could no longer be a mere fraternity holding advanced views on religion and attempting to work their ideals through some recognised institutions of their own but their outlook had perforce to be broadened and made to take in its purview all important aspects of social life. Sikhism had become essentially a religion of householders and to preserve the identity of its votaries social innovations had necessarily to be created, exactly as new religious institutions had been brought into existence in the attempt to perpetuate the influence of Nanak. Thus we can henceforward trace two parallel developments in Sikhism. On the one hand, the work begun by Guru Angad was earnestly continued and new religious ties were added one after another ; on the other, there was a gradual drifting away from the orthodox Hindu society and attempts were made through innovations to bring into existence a new brotherhood, social as well as religious, self-sufficient and independent. It has been said that from the outset Sikhism stood distinguished from other reform movements by its reconciliation with secular life.¹ But, as we have seen, it is certainly going too

Punjab Tribes and Castes, Vol. I, p. 681. It should be pointed out, however, that there is no clear evidence for attributing this measure particularly to Guru Amar Das. Mohsin Fani merely says that 'the Sikhs established that an *audasi*, or one that has abandoned the world, is not to be esteemed higher than any other man (Vol. II, p. 271). Only Malcolm states distinctly that Amar Das made this separation. (*Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 27).

¹ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

far to suggest that the schools like those of Chaitanya or Kabir had no room for householders. In fact what Sikhism really did was to bar the door to asceticism and thus to make the influence of Nanak available not only for religious uplift but also for social regeneration.

The pontificate of the third Guru Amar Das clearly illustrates the truth of what has been said above. It is not always easy to follow the details of the Guru's career through the supernatural myths and the anticipatory legends that abound in the Sikh chronicles but, on the whole, the few sober facts that emerge are sufficient to enable us to understand the importance of his leadership. The career of Amar Das previous to his nomination to the Guruship reveals throughout the sincerity and consistency of his religious efforts. He was a Khatri by birth and belonged to the Bhalla tribe. His father Tej Khan was an inhabitant of the village of Basarka near Amritsar and there the future Guru was born in A.D. 1479. It is said that Amar Das grew up to be a zealous Vaishnava and his whole life was one of assiduous devotion and sincere piety. But he was always tormented by the thought that he had not been able to place himself under the protection and guidance of a spiritual preceptor. His anxiety on this score became almost intolerable when one day a monk expressed great concern because he had eaten food cooked by Amar Das, who had no guru. Amar Das felt very much distressed and fervently prayed to God for a guru 'as will possess the alchemic power of turning dross into gold.' When he was in this 'anxious frame of mind one morning he heard "the dulcet chanting of the Guru's hymns." The song made a great impression on

his mind and on enquiry he learnt that it had been sung by Bibi Amro, Guru Angad's daughter, who had been recently married to a nephew of his. From Bibi Amro Amar Das learnt all about Guru Angad and the rest followed as a matter of course. Accompanied by her he went to pay a visit to Guru Angad. On beholding the Guru his joy knew no bounds and, in his ecstasy, he fell down at Angad's feet.¹ For several years afterwards he devotedly served the Guru in a spirit of complete self-surrender and was rewarded with the Guruship on Angad's death in 1552.

The pontificate of Amar Das began in stress and trouble. He had foreseen that his appointment to the Guruship would not be accepted without a struggle by the family of his predecessor and had accordingly retired to Goindwal in the foundation of which he himself had been mainly instrumental.² But even there he was not left alone. It is said that Datu, the son of Angad, who had usurped the Guru's gaddi at Khadur, derisively called Amar Das a servant of his family and declared himself to be the rightful successor of his father. When he found that in spite of this

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 30, 31; *Sūraj Prakāś, Rās I*, xv.

² The place was originally named Gobindwāl after a man named Gobind, who, it is said, 'had been involved in a law-suit with his relations and vowed that if ever he were victorious he would found a city in honour of the Guru.' He gained the suit and true to his vow obtained the lease of an open plot of land on the Beas from the Emperor and laid the foundations of the city. It seems that his relations created difficulties and Gobind sought the assistance of Guru Angad who sent Amar Das to his rescue. The work was then finished without any further difficulty. The name of the town was later changed to Goindwal. (Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 34; *Sūraj Prakāś, Rās I*, xviii, xix).

proclamation people flocked around Amar Das and saluted him as the true Guru, Datu proceeded to Goindwal and is said to have kicked Amar Das off his *gaddi*. In a spirit of perfect non-resistance the Guru forbade retaliation and retired to a secret retreat in his native village Basarka. The subsequent story is wrapped up in legends but this much appears clear that Datu could not make good his claim as the Sikhs would not accept him and at last went back to Khadur. The storm having blown over, Amar Das returned to Goindwal and reseated himself on his rightful throne.¹

The Guru was now free to devote himself to organisation and reform. The work already begun by Guru Angad was earnestly continued and the *Langar* in particular considerably increased its activities. The Coronation Ode says 'Ever in thy kitchen, O Amar Das, are clarified butter and flour to eat.'² The Guru, as before, lived on coarse food purchased by his own scanty earnings and observed the most ascetic habits. The offerings which had now largely increased in quantity, went entirely to the maintenance of the *Langar*. 'What he daily received was daily spent, and nothing was saved for the morrow.' We have already seen that the *Langar* knew no caste distinctions and a further blow was now given to caste prejudices inasmuch as all his visitors were to eat from his kitchen before they were allowed to behold him.³ On the other hand, there is evidence

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, 64-66; *Sūraj Prakās*, Rās I, xxxiv-xxxvi.

² Macauliffe, *ibid* p. 59.

³ *Ibid*.

to show that the work of collecting and compiling the hymns of the Gurus went on vigorously. Amar Das is said to have declared that 'to make a careful collection of the Guru's hymns and give them to the Sikhs in God's name' was a highly meritorious act¹ and his followers were not slow to act up to this exhortation. It is said that Sant Ram, the son of Mohan, compiled the hymns of Guru Amar Das in a volume which is believed to be still extant,² and we are further told that when Guru Arjan made known his desire of compiling the hymns of the Gurus in one grand volume, Amar Das's son, Mohan supplied him with copies of the first three Gurus' works.

But the Guru had now to take a much wider view of his responsibilities and the expedient of binding the Sikhs by a few religious ties no longer sufficed. The increased activity of the *Langar* clearly shows that the Sikh movement was daily gaining in strength and popularity and the Sikh records piously narrate how by active preaching and propaganda, and often by exhibition of miraculous power the Guru increased the votaries of the new faith. In one instance a corpse is said to have risen to life again through the Guru's power but generally his intercession took the form of blessings of offsprings to barren couples.³ Leaving these legends apart, there can be little doubt that Sikhism made a considerable headway during the pontificate of Amar Das. We

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 85.

² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 79, 80.

are told that several Muhammadans even embraced the new faith and of these the most important seems to have been Alyar, who, under the name of Ala Shah, settled down at Dalla, where a concourse of pious Sikhs gathered around him.¹ But the clearest indication of the spread of Sikhism during the days of Amar Das is provided by the introduction of what has been known as the *manji*-system. That the Sikhs had grown rapidly in number and lay scattered throughout the province is evident from the fact that Amar Das found it necessary to devise some means for administering to the local needs of his followers. It was now impossible for the Guru to offer instruction to all his followers in person and the *Sangat* or Sikh congregation that daily met around him no longer sufficed. Guru Amar Das, therefore, 'divided the Sikh spiritual empire into 22 bishoprics,' or *manjis* ² as they were called. A pious and devoted Sikh was placed in charge of each and the Sikhs were thus provided with convenient local centres. A great step was in this manner taken towards giving the Sikhs an organisation of their own but the Guru was not less careful about his duties at the centre. His own person no doubt provided a strong binding force but the cohesion was

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 77, 78. Bhai Gurdas also testifies to the fact that Dalla had become an important Sikh centre, though in his account of the more notable Sikhs of that place no Muhammadan names appear. (*Wār*, XI, 16.)

² Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 151; *manjis* literally mean 'couches on which the Gurus used to sit and communicate instruction to their audiences.' The word in the singular is *manjā*. See also *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 681.

further strengthened by the creation of a central place of pilgrimage.¹ The story of the foundation of the *Bawali*, or well with descending steps at Goindwal has been embellished with much imaginative fancy by the later Sikh chroniclers. It is said that one day Amar Das fell into a trance when 'he saw Guru Nanak appear and order him to make a place of pilgrimage where God alone should be worshipped.' Thereupon the Guru purchased some land and with due religious ceremony the work commenced. The Sikhs enthusiastically joined in the work and for some time the progress was satisfactory. But soon they found large stones hindering further progress. When the obstacle proved insurmountable 'the Guru inquired if there were any of his Sikhs sufficiently courageous to drive a peg into its base with the object of removing the obstruction. At the same time the Guru warned his hearers that the operation involved great peril. The man who performed it must be able to stem the current which would issue from the aperture formed by the peg ; otherwise he would be drowned.' The Sikhs were dismayed and remained silent. At last a young man named Manak Chand volunteered. The peg was duly driven and the *Bawali* was overflowed with water but in spite of his strenuous efforts Manak Chand was drowned. Next morning, the lamentations of Manak Chand's mother and wife drew the Guru to the *Bawali*. He assured the two ladies that the young man was not really drowned and called him by name. It is said that thereupon the body at once rose to the surface and when the Guru

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 87, 95, 96.

touched it with his feet ' Manak Chand walked forth from the water in the full possession of life and vigour.' How far and how lamentably had the inventors of these stories strayed away from the straight path laid down by the Gurus, whom they claimed to follow ! No praise can be too high for the spirited and ardent manner in which the Gurus disclaimed all miraculous power and strenuously fought against the exhibition of all those 'clever tricks' that were bound to lead to spiritual sterility and hypocrisy. But such a besetting weakness is the love of the miraculous, particularly in the writers of religious records, that even the honest and ardent Sikh Gurus have not been spared. Measures have been attributed to them the like of which they had repeatedly denounced in no uncertain terms, the Sikhs of a later age entirely failing to perceive that they were only belittling the men whom they intended to glorify thereby.

But to return to the *Bawali*, the foundation of which marked a very important step in the history of Sikhism. The well was provided with eighty-four steps and Amar Das is said to have decreed that 'whoever should attentively and reverently repeat the Japji at every step, should escape from wandering in the wombs of the eighty-four lakhs of living creatures.' It soon developed into a very important place of Sikh pilgrimage and the prestige and prosperity of Goindwal enormously increased. The story of the healing virtues of the waters of the *Bawali* might very well be a pious afterthought but there can be little doubt that pilgrims from far and near visited the place and a 'busy traffic' went on. Indeed, Sikhism was

no longer an obscure creed professed by a select band of religious enthusiasts and nothing would have testified more clearly to the increasing popularity of the new faith if we could accept without cavil the statement that Amar Das succeeded in claiming some votaries even from among the chieftains of the hills.¹ However, to crown all came the visit of the Emperor Akbar in person. On his way to Lahore the Emperor came to the Guru's residence at Goindwal and being very much impressed by the saintliness of his character and the purity of all around him requested the Guru to accept a favour. Amar Das politely but firmly refused and at last the Emperor made a grant, in the name of the Guru's daughter Bibi Bhani, of several villages, in and around which the city of Amritsar subsequently grew up.² But apart from the material gain which was by no means unimportant, the visit of the Emperor enormously increased the fame and prestige of the Guru. We are told that the visit of the Emperor made such a profound impression that 'crowds of converts were brought to the fold of Sikhism.'³ And the new faith was further raised in the general estimation of the people when the Gurus, as we shall see, utilised their friendship with the Emperor for the relief of popular distress.

But these successes had not been achieved without struggle and opposition. There were of course the

¹ The Raja of Haripur is said to have accepted the Guru's teachings. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 262; *Panth Prakās*, pp. 73, 74; *Sūraj Prakās*, Ras I, xxxii.) Subsequent events, however, show that this is extremely doubtful.

² Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 97; *Panth Prakās*, p. 77.

³ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

inevitable Jogīs, who, as usual, were worsted in disputation but this time their discomfiture appears to have been more severe. We are told that two Sikhs named Phiria and Katara, of the neighbourhood of Delhi, took possession of a monastery belonging to the followers of Gorakhnath. This made such a profound impression that 'several persons were gradually converted, Jogīs' monasteries were destroyed, and in their places imposing Sikh temples reared to the glory of God and true religion.'¹ These stories may very well be greatly exaggerated and even apocryphal, but their frequent recurrence in the Sikh records leaves little room for doubt that in their work of emancipation and uplift the Gurus had to encounter very serious opposition from the Jogīs. Again, we hear of a second Tapā who resided at Goindwal and who had made it his business to slander the Guru. He was in reality a worthless hypocrite given to inordinate greed. As a contemporary observes, 'he will not approach the place where he seeth little wealth; where he seeth much there he forfeiteth his faith.'² But his greed proved his undoing and he was soon found out. The same observer remarks that 'when he sitteth outside among the village elders he is called a penitent; when he sitteth at home he is committing sin; God hath disclosed his secret sin to the elders.' But apart from these familiar incidents of Jogīs and Tapās, of which there is no dearth in the Sikh chronicles, it appears that Amar Das had to face troubles of a more serious character. It is said that early in his career

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 110.

² Guru Ram Das in *Gaurī kī Wār*; Macauliffe, *ibid*, pp. 99, 100.

at Goindwal the Guru and his Sikhs had to suffer a good deal of annoyance and oppression from the Muhammadans who had settled there. The Guru met them with stoical forbearance but still the insolence of the Muhammadans daily increased. Particularly did their wrath fall on those Sikhs who went to fetch water for the Guru's kitchen. Their earthen vessels were broken with pellets and clods, and when, in accordance with the Guru's advice, they began to use goatskins, the Muhammadans pierced them with arrows. At last the Sikhs substituted the goatskins by brass utensils but these also were knocked off their heads with bricks and stones. But still the Guru would not move. When the Sikhs asked him how long they were to suffer this tyranny of the Muhammadans the Guru replied, 'as long as you live. It is not proper for saints to take revenge.' The chronicler hastens to add that a divine chastisement soon overtook the tyrants. A body of armed *Sannyāsis* arrived at Goindwal and a quarrel broke out between them and the Muhammadans in course of which many of the Guru's enemies are said to have been killed. The authenticity of this story may be somewhat doubtful but there is nothing improbable in it and it may be pointed out that even armed *Sannyāsis* were by no means rare in those days.¹ Moreover, this incident very clearly illustrates the spirit of earlier Sikhism and the narrative is at least unlike others 'in which subsequent principles and events

¹ For instance, the *Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh* refers to a severe fight between one such band and some Mussalman Fakirs near about Batala. We are told that the Emperor Akbar personally intervened and settled the matter (Zafar Hasan's edition, p. 425).

are anticipated, insensibly throwing back their light and colour upon the tissue of tradition.' Whatever that might be, more serious trouble was in store for Amar Das. Indeed, his solid successes, one after another, could not but raise enemies against him. The new faith soon became important enough to excite the jealousy of the Brahmans, who had perhaps hitherto looked upon the endeavours of the Sikh Gurus with indifference. The Khatri also made common cause with the Brahmans and a Marwaha¹ among them is said to have taken a leading part in the campaign against the Guru. To these were also added the men from whom the Guru had purchased the land for the *Bawali*, who now falsely complained that the Guru had not paid them its stipulated price. The confederates then drew up petitions detailing their grievances against Amar Das and went on a deputation to the Emperor. The petition of the Marwaha Khatri was summarily rejected but the Emperor is said to have

¹ Marwaha or Merwaha—a Khatri clan belonging to the Sarin group and claiming a central Asian origin. "Their earliest traceable settlement is at Govindwal or Gondwal, in Amritsar, which they say was made into a large place by one Baba Govind Rai, a devotee. This man was granted lands in *jāgir* for giving food to a Mussalman king, who came to him hungry during a hunting expedition. Afterwards one Guru Bhala, with whom the Marwahas had quarrelled, cursed them for refusing to allow his-followers to drink from the same well. Thereupon, large numbers of them settled elsewhere" (*Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, p. 524). It seems to us that in this Marwaha tradition we have an echo of the quarrel between the Sikhs and the Marwaha Khatri for supremacy at Goindwal. It is interesting to note that the Sikh chronicles also state that the place had been founded by a man named Gobind and the Guru Bhala referred to above might very well be Guru Amar Das, who, as we know, belonged to the Bhalla tribe of the Khatri.

summoned the Guru in order to confront him with the Brahmans. Amar Das excused himself on the score of age and sent Jetha to Delhi to deputise for him. The latter had no difficulty in explaining away the frivolous charges levelled against the Guru and the Emperor had no hesitation in giving a decision wholly favourable to the Guru and his cause. However, as a matter of friendly advice the Emperor sent a request through Jetha to Guru Amar Das to make a pilgrimage to the Ganges in order to divert the wrath of the Hindus and promised that he would issue an order to the effect that no pilgrims' tax should be levied on the Guru's party.¹ But these details should be scanned thoroughly before they are accepted as history. It must not be forgotten that the main authority for most of these stories is the *Sūraj Prakās*, a work written about three hundred years after the days of Amar Das and in this particular instance we cannot also entirely ignore the possibility that the Emperor's well-known patronage of the Guru might easily have led to fanciful embellishments on the part of later writers. But at the same time it should be clearly understood that for two items at least of the above narrative we have got contemporary evidence. The deputation of the Marwaha Khatri and the remission of the pilgrims' tax on the Guru's party are testified to by two hymns, the first in the *Gaurī kī Wār* and the other in the *Tukhārī Chant*. However, from the first hymn it only appears that 'the perverse man,' as the Marwaha is called, had sent his servant somewhere with a complaint

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 108.

against the Guru but was completely thwarted in his designs. But there is no hint as to whom the complaint was made or what it was about. The discomfiture of the man is described in some detail and the hymn concludes with the warning—‘Him who slandereth the perfect true Guru, the True One punisheth and destroyeth.’¹ There is thus nothing in the record which entitles us to say that the Marwaha had sent a deputation to the Emperor or that he had been in league with Brahmans and other Khattris. Further, although we are quite conscious of the limitations of what is known as *argumentum ab silentio*, it seems rather strange that Jetha left no record of what has subsequently been described as a combined move against the Guru and in discrediting which he himself played the most conspicuous part, particularly when we find that he deigned to notice even the very insignificant incident of the Tapā at Goindwal. It may not thus be improbable that the narrative about the deputation to the Emperor is compounded of fact and fiction, the genuine statements of Jetha supplying the foundation and the Emperor’s friendship the motive for the later embellishments.

But the other story about the Guru’s pilgrimage stands on much surer grounds. The motive for this, as suggested in the narrative discussed above, may be unacceptable but there is little difficulty in accepting the plain statement of Jetha that ‘the true Guru made the toil of pilgrimage in order to save all people,’ or in other words, that it was undertaken with the object of preaching the message of Sikhism. In spite of

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 104.

apparent exaggerations here and there, Jetha's account of the pilgrimage is, on the whole, a sober document and may be safely followed. It appears that the Guru and his party first visited Kurkhetar. It was an auspicious time and a fair had assembled at the place. Many *Sannyāsis* and Jogis, as also the representatives of different schools of thought had come there on the occasion and with these the Guru entered into disputations. On the whole, he made a profound impression at the fair and then went to the Jumna. Here an interesting thing happened. The toll-collectors made no difficulty in allowing the Guru and his party to pass but many others also escaped by taking the Guru's name. The same story repeated itself at Hardwar which Amar Das next visited. There also every one escaped under the cover of the Guru's name and 'the toll-collectors by their skill and cleverness saw it was best to close their boxes and go away.' In other respects also the Guru's triumph was complete and it is said that 'the leading men of the city went in a body and took shelter in the true Guru.'¹ The last remark might very well be of the nature of a pious wish but there can be little doubt that the remission of the pilgrims' tax on the Guru and his party and the fact that others also could escape under the cover of his name marked him out as a person of special sanctity and privilege and greatly redounded to the glory and prestige of the faith he represented.

Henceforward the Guru passed his days in comparative ease and there is little outstanding to record. But as has been hinted above, with the definite split

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 112-114.

with the *Udāsīs*, or gradual dissociation with their ideals and principles as the case might be, the social aspect of Sikhism became at once a vital question. Sikhism had become or was becoming exclusively a religion of householders and in order to save its votaries from absorption it now became necessary to supplement the work of religious organisation by social reforms. This aspect of the work of Guru Amar Das would now demand our attention. The Sikh records state that the Guru proclaimed that gatherings of Sikhs should be held on the first days of the months of Baisakh and Magh and on the day of the ancient festival of the Diwali. The Sikhs were thus provided with opportunities of coming in contact and fraternising with one another and this must have resulted in the strengthening of their sense of brotherhood. And, as Macauliffe suggests, the Guru's object might as well have been to wean his followers away from the Hindu practices associated with those particular days of the year.¹ But though this step was not without its social implications its main interest was religious and the Guru's attempt at social reconstruction is best illustrated in his attempted reform of the ceremonies in vogue at marriage and death. In view of the unsatisfactory character of most of the Sikh chronicles abounding in anticipatory legends of various kinds, it would no doubt have been uncomfortable if we had to depend on them alone but there are two references, of a more or less authentic character, which lead us to think that something had been done though it might not have been as sweeping

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 79, f.n. 1.

and decisive as the later writers suggest. In the first place, it is said that at the request of Guru Arjan, Sundar Das, a great-grandson of Guru Amar Das, wrote an account of the death of the third Guru. Now, in the '*Sadd*,' as the composition is called and 'which is now sung by Sikhs on all occasions of mourning,' we read:

" Finally, the true Guru spoke, 'After my death sing God's praises.

' Call God instead of a pandit and, for the Garar Puran, read God's word ;

' Read God's word, hear God's name ; the Guru desireth, God's love instead of a lofty bier,

' Barley rolls, bread on leaves, *Hindu* obsequies, lamps, and throwing his bones into the Ganges.' " ¹

Here we have a clear hint that Guru Amar Das desired that at least in his own case his followers should dispense with the elaborate Hindu ceremonies connected with death. The point may no doubt be raised that Sundar Das was certainly not an eye-witness of what happened at the time of his great-grandfather's death² and that his statement might easily have been coloured by subsequent developments, but the fact that Sundar Das wrote not more than thirty years after the death of Amar Das when several of the latter's contemporaries were still living and that his statement obtained a ready acceptance considerably weakens the above objections. In fact, there seems

¹ *Sadd*, v : Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 153.

² Sundar Das was the son of Mohri's second son, Anand, who himself was born possibly towards the middle of Guru Amar Das's pontificate.

to be little doubt that in the *Sadd* we get a genuine hint as to the views of Guru Amar Das regarding the Hindu obsequies, though it is quite possible that he merely attempted a mild discountenance and not a prohibition by positive enactment. Secondly, the hymn of Guru Ram Das in the *Sūhī Chant*, which has now become a Sikh epithalamium and in which is described the spiritual significance of the *Lāwān*,¹ indirectly shows that some change had been introduced in the marriage ceremony as well. The statement that this hymn was composed on the occasion of his own marriage by Guru Ram Das may or may not be true but that hardly affects its significance. It clearly appears that the Guru was commenting on a custom already in existence and we may as well accept the Sikh tradition that the change had been introduced by his predecessor.

Moreover, it has been said that Guru Amar Das prohibited the practice of *Satī* or the burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands. As far as we are aware, the only authority for this statement is the following hymn of the third Guru:

“ Women are burnt in the fire with their husbands :
If they appreciate their husbands they undergo
sufficient pain by their death.

¹ “ *Lāwān* is that part of the marriage ceremony which consists in tying together the upper garments of the bride and bridegroom, and causing them to go four times round the *Granth Sāhib*, while this hymn is repeated by the Sikh priest.” (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 334, 335). It should be noted, however, that this is a common Hindu practice, though the number of the rounds is generally seven and the *Granth Sāhib* is, of course, absent. The Sikh rite was thus merely an adaptation. We do not know what the exact Hindu practice was in the

Nanak, if they appreciate not their husbands, why should they be burnt ?

Whether the husband be alive or dead such women will flee far away from him.”¹

As Cunningham remarks, this was rather a very mild discountenance ‘leading the way to amendment by persuasion rather than by positive enactment.’² And the same remark would possibly apply to the following hymn of Guru Amar Das which sounds like ‘an order to abstain altogether from wine.’ Says the Guru :

“One man bringeth the full goblet, another cometh and filleth the cup.

The intellect of him who drinketh departeth, and intoxication entereth his brain.

He distinguisheth not between mine and thine, and is buffeted by his master.

If possible, drinknot at all the false wine,

By which man forgetteth God and receiveth punishment at His court.”³

This is all that we know of the work of Guru Amar Das as a social reformer. The changes he desired to introduce in the very important ceremonies connected with marriage and death struck at the very root of the influence of the priestly class, and though in such a matter, where long-standing customs and cherished practices were concerned, success must necessarily have been slow, the ball had been set rolling

days of Ram Das. If the number of the rounds had been four, evidence supplied by this hymn would become at once doubtful.

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 228.

² Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 50. ³ Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 215.

and Sikhism put on the way of gradual dissociation from Hinduism and consolidation into a separate sect.

The pontificate of Guru Amar Das may thus be regarded as a turning point in the history of Sikhism in more ways than one. Starting in an attempt to reform and restate, Sikhism, like other similar movements in all ages and climes, met with a tardy but progressive response and much more vigorous opposition. It was soon found that even the perversions and abuses of the old had staunch adherents who far outnumbered the advocates of the new message and thus a breach arose which at every step became more wide and at last almost irreparable. This is a phenomenon common enough in religious history and it is the innate conservatism of human nature in matters religious that makes the dividing line between reform and revolution so thin and unsteady, and so difficult to comprehend. Whatever that might be, the original mission of Sikhism had perforce to be circumscribed and now it only remained for it to force its own way as best as it could. It had to forge its own weapons, hedge itself behind newer forms and customs, in short to develop an individuality of its own. And, as we have seen, the split with the *Udāsīs* made it incumbent that the followers of Nanak were not merely to be a religious fraternity but a separate community with its own social customs and ideals. From what has been said before it would appear that Guru Amar Das had almost unreservedly accepted this position and worked strenuously to give reality to it. Under his auspices the name of the infant church spread far and wide, rudiments of a separate organisation were given to the Sikhs, and new forms and practices were introduced to

supersede the old and bind the neophytes more closely together. Guru Angad had, no doubt, done something to give the Sikhs an individuality of their own but it was under Amar Das that the difference between a Hindu and a Sikh became more pronounced and 'the Sikhs began gradually to drift away from the Orthodox Hindu society and form a class, a sort of new brotherhood by themselves.'

Guru Amar Das was succeeded by his son-in-law Ram Das, a Khatri of the Soḍhi tribe, whose father Hari Das was an inhabitant of Lahore, where the future Guru was born in A.D. 1534. From his very boyhood Ram Das appears to have been of a religious bent of mind and exceedingly fond of the society of holy men 'to whom he gave whatever he received from his parents.' When still rather young Ram Das is said to have fallen in with a company of Sikhs who were on their way to Goindwal. He accompanied the party and on his arrival at Goindwal unhesitatingly prostrated himself before the Guru. The latter, on his part, was so favourably impressed by Ram Das's sincerity and devotion, as also his handsome exterior, that he married his younger daughter Bibi Bhani to him. Contrary to the usual custom, he continued to live with his wife at Goindwal and soon became the most conspicuous figure there, as is clearly shown by his nomination to the Guruship by Amar Das on the eve of his death in 1574.

In the *Sadd* we read :

“ As the true Guru spoke, so his disciples obeyed his wishes. His son Mohri became obedient to him, and fell at Ram Das's feet.

Then all fell at the feet of the true Guru into whom Guru Amar Das had infused his spirit.

Any person who through jealousy did not bow before him was brought by the supernatural power of the true Guru, and made bow before him.”¹

Here we get a clear hint that Ram Das's succession was viewed with disfavour by at least one person and there can be little doubt that the recalcitrant was Mohan. Of the two sons of Guru Amar Das, Mohri readily accepted Ram Das as the legitimate Guru but Mohan thought otherwise. His opposition, however, was by no means so insolent as that of Datu who did not spare Amar Das even when he had retired to Goindwal and it appears that Mohan bowed to the inevitable, though with evident reluctance. In the Sikh records we come across several statements which seem to show that the reconciliation was never sincere² and this must have been one of the main reasons which led Guru Ram Das to build a new place for himself away from Goindwal. In fact, on the authority of

¹ It is said that Jetha was of an other-worldly temperament from his very boyhood and though his parents desired that he should turn to some occupation for his livelihood Jetha himself thought otherwise. We are told that on one occasion Jetha's mother boiled some pulse, put it in a basket and gave it to her son to sell. There was a poor neighbour who made his living by selling boiled pulse and this gave Jetha's mother the idea. But instead of going to the bazars and streets for sale Jetha went with his basket to the river Ravi, where he came across a company of holy men to whom he gave the whole contents of his basket and returned home. It is to be noted that similar stories were current about Nanak as well and it may not be improbable that the present one had been inspired by them. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 88)

² Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 258; Vol. III, p. 56.

the *Sūraj Prakās* Macauliffe says that Guru Amar Das had anticipated this difficulty and had accordingly advised Ram Das to build a house in the lands assigned by the Emperor and 'then excavate a tank to the east of it as a place of Sikh pilgrimage.'¹ The work appears to have commenced during the lifetime of Guru Amar Das and continued for some time after Ram Das's accession. But for some unaccountable reason it was left alone and the Guru began to excavate another tank, which he called *Amritsar* or the tank of nectar. by enlarging a pool the water of which is said to have possessed miraculous efficacy. "While the tank was being excavated dwellings arose in the vicinity for the accommodation of the Guru's Sikhs, visitors and workmen ; and in time a beautiful city was constructed which was at first called Ramdasapur." But in fact Ram Das only laid the foundations of the tank as well as of the city and the work was completed by his son and successor Guru Arjan.²

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 141.

² The whole question is involved in some complexity and we have in the main followed Macauliffe. A notable miracle connected with the pool that formed the nucleus of the 'tank of nectar' is represented in the *Sūraj Prakās* to have occurred in the time of Guru Arjan. This would tend to suggest that the excavation of 'the tank of nectar' really commenced in the days of Guru Arjan and that Ram Das had nothing to do with it. Macauliffe says that 'it is not likely that Guru Ram Das would have neglected to carry out the work which he himself had begun under the order of his beloved father-in-law, the third Guru.' But as this statement also is based on the authority of the *Sūraj Prakās* it cannot be regarded as conclusive. All that we can say is that this throws a doubt on the narrative of the *Sūraj Prakās* (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 226-270). The other argument adduced by Macauliffe seems to be more convincing. The fact that the city of Amritsar in its early days was known as Ramdasapur 'furnishes an

The excavation of this tank, which too was left incomplete, has been the only outstanding record of the pontificate of Ram Das. Bhai Gurdas says:

“ The Sodhi king Ram Das sat on the throne, and was called the true Guru.

He dug a perfect tank, and awakened the light of divine knowledge in Amrisar.” ¹

Bhai Gurdas's account of the successors of Nanak is, no doubt, hopelessly meagre and often practically useless but it appears that in this instance at least he has not failed to record the central and the most outstanding fact. It is true that the credit of laying the foundations of the city of Ramdaspur is also due to the fourth Guru but it can be easily seen that this

additional proof that Guru Ram Das continued the work he had begun under his predecessor' (*ibid*, p. 276, f.n.). We may add that Mohsin Fani's description of Ramdaspur as a place ' where the Gurus Ramdas and Arjun-mal had built great edifices and dug tanks,' further strengthens Macauliffe's conclusion (*Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 275).

On the other hand, some writers say that the grant of the villages by the Emperor had been made to Ram Das (Forster's *Travels*, Vol. I, p. 258; Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 50; *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 682). The *Amritsar Gazetteer* (1883-84, p. 61) states that the site of Amritsar was first occupied by Ram Das. ' It was marked by a small natural pool of water, which is said to have been a favourite resort of Baba Nanak. On the margin of this pool Guru Ram Das erected himself a hut. Soon afterwards, in 1577, he obtained a grant of the site, together with 500 bighas of land from the Emperor Akbar on payment of Rs. 700 *akbari* to the Zemindars of Tung, who owned the land.' If this is true the statement of the *Sūraj Prakāś* that Guru Amar Das had asked Ram Das to build a place for himself in the land granted by the Emperor is obviously wrong. But as the *Gazetteer* gives us no hint as to the source of these statements we cannot say anything about their authenticity.

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I. 47.

was, more or less, a bye-product of the main business of excavating the ' tank of nectar.' The Sikh chroniclers, no doubt, add many other details and several stories about Jogīs and Tapās reappear as usual, but it seems to us that the only other matter that deserves more than a passing notice is the statement that Ram Das earnestly took up the work of propagandism and sent preachers to different parts of the country to spread the new faith. It is said that Bhai Gurdas himself was sent to Agra to preach the Sikh religion there. He became a famous and successful preacher and ' sent several of the Agra Sikhs to the Guru, who taught them the advantages of human birth and the necessity of working out ultimate salvation therein.' Sikhism spread by rapid strides during the days of Guru Arjan and Bhai Gurdas himself refers to a very prosperous Sikh *Sangat* at Agra. It may not be improbable that the initial impetus that led to these results had been given by Ram Das but still it appears to us that his regime was more or less uneventful and ' though he is among the most revered of the Gurus, no precepts of wide application or rules of great practical value or force, are attributed to him.'

Guru Ram Das died in 1581 and was succeeded by his youngest son Arjan, who was then 18 years of age having been born in 1563. The eldest son Prithia had enraged his father by constant intrigues to discredit Arjan whom he knew to be the Guru's favourite and the second son Mahadev ' was a religious enthusiast and heeded not sublunary affairs.' It is stated in the Sikh chronicles that, on one occasion, Sahari

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 264, 271.

Mal, a first cousin of Guru Ram Das, came from Lahore and invited the Guru to grace his son's marriage with his presence. The Guru excused himself on grounds of heavy responsibilities at home but promised to send one of his sons. Ram Das first asked Prithia to go to Lahore to attend the marriage ceremony but Prithia refused. We are told that "Prithia had two motives of his own for refusing. He was in charge of the offerings, and was able to furtively set aside much wealth for himself. If he went to Lahore this illicit gain would fall to some one else. The time, too, was approaching for the selection of a Guru in succession to his father and he apprehended supersession during his absence." Absorbed in his own religious pursuits Mahadev also positively refused to have anything to do with the affair but Arjan, who was all humility and obedience, unhesitatingly agreed and forthwith proceeded to Lahore. It was arranged that after the wedding was over Arjan would remain for some time at Lahore and look to the affairs of the *Sangat* there. It is said that after some days Arjan felt the pangs of separation from his father and wrote him a letter requesting his recall. Prithia intercepted this letter and the Guru could know nothing about it. From what Arjan heard from his messenger he could easily guess what had happened and he addressed a second letter but with no better result. This time, too, Prithia got hold of it and kept his father in the dark. Therefore Arjan sent another letter and took the precaution of writing No. 3 on it, so that the Guru might know that two other letters had been previously written. The messenger also was duly instructed to deliver the

letter personally to the Guru and this time Prithia failed to play the same old trick. The letter was delivered to the Guru and Prithia's deceit was immediately found out. The two previous letters were discovered in Prithia's room hidden inside a coat and his discomfiture was complete. Arjan was immediately sent for and on his arrival 'the Guru sent for five paisa and a cocoanut, placed them before Arjan, and descending from his throne seated him on it in the presence of the whole assembly. Bhai Budha affixed the tilak or mark of spiritual sovereignty to Arjan's forehead, and he was publicly proclaimed Guru amid universal manifestations of delight.'¹ But Prithia positively refused to submit and adopted an attitude of open defiance. He declared that the Guru had acted improperly and vowed that he would yet seize the Guruship by force. Prithia did not hesitate even to insult his father again and again till at last the Guru could bear it no longer. He drove Prithia out and said, 'Thou art a Mina; my Sikhs will not obey thee, and will never associate with thee.'²

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 281. The ceremony of initiation was strikingly simple. The old *Janamsākhī* states that in the case of Angad Guru Nanak merely 'put five paisa before him and fell down at his feet' (Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xiv). In later cases a cocoanut also seems to have been laid before the successor. Further the *tilak* or coronation mark was affixed on the successor's forehead. Bhai Budha, a Jat disciple of Guru Nanak, performed this with regard to five of his successors. We are further told that "the significance of the *tilak* is well known. It is often if not generally affixed by a dominant or autochthonous agricultural class and in this instance the choice of Bhai Budha represented the Jat recognition of the Guru's chiefship" (*Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 680).

² *Sūraj Prakāś*, Rās II, xix-xxii; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 276-284. Macauliffe says that 'this word originally meant a tribe of

Though it is quite possible that much of the above story is a later setting and that the details about the blackness of Prithia's character have been somewhat overdrawn, the fact stands that Prithia quarrelled with his father about Arjan's nomination to the Guruship and could never reconcile himself with that decision. The two hymns of Guru Ram Das that Macauliffe quotes, leave absolutely no doubt that Prithia's bickerings embittered the last days of his father. In the first the Guru gently admonishes his son not to quarrel as 'it is a sin to quarrel with him who begot thee and reared thee' and in the second the Guru proclaims soberly but emphatically the irrevocability of his decision and the utter futility of all slanderous protestations. Says the Guru :

“ God in the beginning bestowed on his saints the ambrosial storehouse of saintship.

The fool who trieth to rival them, shall have his face blackened both in this world and the next.

They are saints, they are worshippers to whom God's name is dear.

Hindu robbers of Rājputānā. In the Panjāb the name is now applied to a villain with a smiling face' (Vol. II, p. 284, f. n.). It appears, however, that the tribe is almost invariably criminal in the Punjab though in Alwar and Jaipur, where their original home lies, this is not the case. They are professional thieves and the boldest of the criminal classes in the Punjab. (*Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, pp. 102, 103.) It is thus quite conceivable that the word *mīṇā* became a vile term of opprobrium. In *Wār XXXVI*, Bhai Gurdas gives a long discourse on the *mīṇā* and, though one might be tempted to connect the verses with Prithia and his followers, it seems clear that the word is used in the sense of *kapaṭī* or deceitful. But though the story that Guru Ram Das called Prithia a *mīṇā* and drove him out is only to be found in the later Sikh records, it seems that the application of the name to Prithia's followers is as old as the *Dabistān*. (Vol. II, p. 273.)

God is obtained by their service ; ashes shall be thrown on the slanderer's head.

In the case of the four Gurus none hath ever obtained the Guruship by revilings ; it is by God's service the Guruship is obtained." ¹

It seems clear that though in none of these hymns Prithia is mentioned by name, they undoubtedly refer to him and his doings.

Under the circumstances, it was hardly to be expected that Prithia would take Arjan's accession to the Guruship in the light of anything but usurpation. In fact, he regarded the Guruship as his by right and remained the bitterest enemy of Guru Arjan practically till the closing episode of the latter's career. We are told that immediately after the accession of Guru Arjan Prithia entered into intrigues with Sulahi Khan, a revenue officer of the province of Lahore, and complained to the *Chaudhris* of Amritsar that he and his second brother Mahadev had been left without maintenance. On a representation being made to the Guru ' he granted certain taxes and house rents to Prithia, the customs duties of Pasian ka Chauk (a ward of Amritsar) to Mahadev, and merely reserved for himself the voluntary offerings of the faithful.' ² This compromise appears to have worked more or less satisfactorily for several years and left Guru Arjan free for a time at least to devote his energy to more vital matters.

The first task to which the new Guru set himself was to complete the work left unfinished by his prede-

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 283, 284.

² *Sūraj Prakāś*, Rās II, xxix ; Macauliffe, *ibid.* p. 2.

cessor. It has already been seen that Guru Ram Das had begun the construction of the city of Ramdaspur within the limits of which he had dug the tank of nectar ' which was already climbing up into rivalry with the sacred Ganges in the eyes of the Sikhs.' But death cut him off before the work could be finally completed. There was further another tank called *Santokhsar* which, too, had been left unfinished. It appears that during the first eight years of his pontificate Guru Arjan was busily occupied with this threefold task and he further extended the scope of the undertaking by projecting the *Har Mandar* or the temple of God, which he built in the midst of Ram Das's ' tank of nectar.' From a remark in one of the Guru's hymns that ' the creator stood in the midst of the work, and not a hair of any man's head was touched ' ¹ it seems that the work went on smoothly and when it was finally completed, Guru Arjan, in his characteristic manner, attributed everything to the mercy of God. " God Himself came, and stood up to do the work of the saints. He did it whose work it was ; what is wretched man ? " said the Guru.² In the fullness of his heart the Guru proclaimed :

" He who here below singeth a song of rejoicing
over this work,

Shall obtain the fruit his heart desireth.

He who while meditating on his God

Cometh to bathe here shall be made safe and whole.

He who batheth in the saints' tank

Shall obtain final salvation." ³

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³ *Ibid*, p. 11.

² *Ibid*, p. 12.

It can be easily seen that the result of this declaration was to make Amritsar, as the city now came to be called, the most important place of Sikh pilgrimage. Guru Arjan also finally removed his residence there and made it the centre of Sikh activities.¹ 'This was of the greatest importance for the firm establishment of Sikhism, for the Sikhs obtained thereby a fixed central place of worship, where the disciples annually assembled round their Guru and performed their ablutions in the nectar tank.'

It was also possibly in this connection that Guru Arjan introduced what has since been known as the *masand*-system. We have seen how under Guru Amar Das Sikhism had been thoroughly reconciled with secular life and how the disciples had been told 'to worship God in their own homes and not to go to the wilderness to find Him.'² The Gurus were never tired of hammering this idea upon their followers. 'The life of the hermit was of no avail'³ and 'leading the life of a householder by which somebody may gain was better than putting on a sectarian dress.'⁴ And 'the best use to which money could be applied would be to fill the Guru's kitchen with corn and supply the necessities of pilgrims.'⁵ The

¹ But it appears that the Guru still continued to reside off and on at Goindwal as is evident from the fact that Jahangir describes him as an inhabitant of that place. (*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Rogers and Beveridge, Vol. I, p. 72.) As we shall see later on, the visit of Akbar to Arjan also took place at Goindwal.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 193.

³ *Ibid*, p. 214.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 37.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 90.

Sikhs were 'to give a tithe of their substance to God'¹ and the result of this teaching was to convert the Sikhs into a body of householders, one of whose most essential duties was to offer something of their substance to the Guru. Offerings came in profusion and the Guru's *Langar* daily increased its activities. A change seems to have been made during the days of Guru Ram Das, who is said to have sent agents throughout the country for the purpose of collecting contributions from his followers for the excavation of the tanks he had planned.² But as yet the contributions were absolutely voluntary though it was becoming difficult to allow things to continue in this irregular manner. The Gurus had considerably widened the range of their activities and their enterprises in building and excavation required a more steady flow of resources. On the other hand, 'the number of the Sikhs had immensely increased and as they were scattered over all parts of the Punjab, from Peshawar to Delhi, the collection of these gifts was very difficult and very often they did not find their way into the treasury of the Gurus.' Nay, the Sikhs had even spread to provinces far distant from the Punjab³ and it can be easily seen that a change in the method of collection had become imperatively necessary. The

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 71.

² *Ibid*, p. 271.

³ Mohsin Fani says 'the number of these sectaries increased everywhere, so that, in the time of the Guru Arjunmal it became very considerable, and at last there was no place in any country, where Sikhs were not to be found.' (*Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 270.) Bhai Gurdas's account of Sikh *Sangats* in his XIth *Wār* also clearly shows how Sikhism had widely spread by his time.

Sikh records are more or less silent about the matter but fortunately the *Dabistān* tells us how Guru Arjan sought to meet the difficulty. Mohsin Fani says, "Before the fifth period no tribute was exacted from the Sikhs, but presents were given by them according to their own discretion to their Gurus. Arjunmal sent in his time a person to the Sikhs of each town in order to collect a tribute; in that manner, the Sikhs accustomed themselves to the government of a masand or deputy."¹ It will be seen that the voluntary contributions of the faithful were now made compulsory and arrangement was made for their collection through authorised agents, who came to be known as *masands*.² This innovation was, more or less, revolutionary in character and far-reaching in its consequences. As Narang points out, 'the Guru could now arrange his budget with much more certainty, as the dues of the Gurus were paid more readily and unfailingly than even the Mughal revenues'³ and, on the other hand, 'the Sikhs were gradually accustomed to a kind of government of their own, and began to

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 271.

² Macauliffe says that 'in the time of the Afghan Kings, nobles were styled Masnad i-Ali. Hence, the word masnad was employed as the ordinary appellation of courtiers. From its frequent use it was changed in the mouths of Sikhs into masand. The Guru was called Sacha Padshah, or the true king, so his agents were styled masands.' (Vol. II, p. 271.) See also *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 271.

³ Narang, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 35. Narang says that 'masand seems to be a corruption of masnad, shorter form of masnad-i-Ali or His Excellency, the title of Mughal governors. This is another proof of the rising power of the Sikhs. When the Guru became the true King his Viceroys must of course be their Excellencies.'

feel themselves as a firmly organised and strong party within the State.'¹

But these successes proved too much for Prithia, who now threw over the compromise and began anew his intrigues against the Guru. The position appears to have become so serious that the Guru thought it best to leave Amritsar alone for some time and go out on a tour of propaganda. This was indirectly of the greatest importance in the history of Sikhism. Guru Arjan appears to have undertaken a rather detailed tour in the Manjha country and as a result of his efforts the hold of Sikhism over the tract in question was henceforward indisputably established. The Sikh records give us many details, some of which at least are hardly acceptable but, on the whole, it is not difficult to trace the Guru's progress in this tour of propaganda. He first visited Khadur and Goindwal, places sanctified by two of his predecessors, and then passing through the villages of Bhaini and Khanpur, arrived at Khara where, 'the prospect around him—the flowering woods and glades, the limpid water, and the fresh and exhilarating atmosphere' appears to have made such a profound impression on his mind that he forthwith procured land from the villagers and laid there the foundation of a city, which came to be known as Tarn Taran.² The tank which the Guru planned could not be completed owing to the interference of a local Muhammadan official but a good beginning had been

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxii.

² The place appears to have been founded in 1590. 'The name Tarn Taran means a raft to take men across the world's ocean.' (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 25.)

made and the place forthwith gained ground as an important resort of Sikh pilgrimage. We have already seen that Sikh tradition claimed miraculous healing powers for the waters of the sacred tank of Amritsar ; a similar and even more insistent declaration seems to have been made in the case of Tarn Taran as well, and there may be something in the suggestion that ' the mythical powers of the water of the tank in the cure of leprosy would appear to have been pronounced by Guru Arjan with the object of getting rid of persons afflicted with that loathsome disease from the sacred precincts of the temple at Amritsar.'¹ At least this much is certain that many lepers were in past times drawn there by the reputation of the place and a large quarter of the town is now inhabited by lepers.² However, the foundation of this city was of great importance in the history of Sikhism. ' Tarn Taran is the capital of the tract of country known as the Manjha or middle land, which extends from the Ravi to the Bias, the nursery of the chivalry of the Native Army, and the home of a sturdy and strong race of agriculturists.'³ The people of this tract have always formed the backbone of the Sikh community and this fact may very well be attributed to the propaganda work of Guru Arjan and the foundation of the city of Tarn Taran in the very heart of their country.

It appears that the Guru then crossed the Bias and went over to the Jalandhar district where he is said

¹ *Amritsar District Gazetteer*, 1883-4, p. 76.

² *Ibid.* ' About a mile from the town there is an asylum for the reception of indigent lepers from all parts of the province.'

³ *Ibid.*

to have laid the nucleus of another city which he called Kartarpur and which has since risen to considerable spiritual and temporal eminence. The Guru next passed through a network of villages, preaching everywhere with success and making many converts, and at last arrived at Lahore. Here he made arrangements for the construction of the Guru's *Bawali* at Dabbi Bazar and then proceeded to the Gurdaspur district. He visited in turn the shrine of Guru Nanak at Dehra Baba Nanak and the *Udāsī* Srichand at Barath and finally returned to Amritsar.

The next important incident in the Guru's career is the birth of his son Hargobind at Wadali in 1595 A. D. It seems that the tour of propaganda had lasted about 5 years and it was possibly about 1594 that he returned to Amritsar.¹ The Sikh records state that the Guru's long absence had not, in the least, soothed the feelings of Prithia who continued to annoy him as before. Indeed, this enmity of Prithia proved such a great obsession with the Sikh chroniclers that they have mixed it up even with the circumstances of the birth of Hargobind. It is said that Prithia's jealousy was continually fanned by his wife Karmo but Prithia consoled her with the assurance that as Guru Arjan had no issue their son Mihrban was bound to succeed to the *gaddi*. This conversation, we are told, was overheard

¹ Macauliffe says that it was in 1589 that the Guru laid the first brick of the masonry foundation of the Har Mandir (*op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 10). We are told that the construction of Tarn Taran began in 1590. It thus seems that the Guru must have started on his tour about the end of 1589. From the Sikh records it also appears that the Guru returned to Amritsar at least a year before the birth of Hargobind which happened in 1595.

by the Guru's wife Ganga who became forthwith anxious for a child and prayed of her husband to grant her the boon of a son. The Guru thereupon sent his wife to Bhai Budha, an ancient Sikh of Guru Nanak's time who dwelt in a neighbouring forest, to pray for the desired boon. The mission to Bhai Budha, however, proved unsuccessful as he seems to have been perturbed by the display of the Guru's wife who had gone to him in great state, 'taking with her as her attendants the wives of the headmen of Amritsar.' Bhai Budha is said to have humbly represented to her that he was merely a grass-cutter and servant of her house. He disclaimed all powers of intercession and told her that it was the Guru alone who fulfilled every one's desires. Ganga returned disappointed to her husband and reported the failure of her mission. Guru Arjan told her that the saints and the true Guru never liked display and that if she wished to succeed she must go to Bhai Budha in an attitude of humility and supplication. She did as she was told and this time Bhai Budha blessed her and said that she would have a son who would be 'very handsome and brave, possess spiritual and temporal power, become a mighty hunter, ride on royal steeds, wear two swords, be puissant in battle, and trample on the Mughals.'¹

It is clearly unnecessary to bring in the jealousy of Karmo to explain Ganga's very natural desire for a son. From Guru Arjan's own hymns it appears that he had become very anxious for a son and when he got one he wrote in the fulness of his heart: 'The True

¹ *Sūraj Prakāś, Rās III, i-iii; Macauliffe, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 29-32.*

Guru hath granted me what my heart desired.' And it is possible or even probable that the prophecy about the character and achievements of Hargobind had been put into the mouth of Bhai Budha by a later chronicler. But the story of Bhai Budha's having had some connection with the birth of Hargobind cannot be altogether brushed aside. Besides the fact that we have a very strong Sikh tradition to that effect we have to take into account the hymns composed by Guru Arjan on the occasion of the birth of his son, which contain distinct references to a saint. The Guru says that 'everybody hath been making his own remarks,' or in other words, people had been saying that he would have no children but 'that the words of holy men are immutable is apparent to all.' ¹ Further on the Guru adds—'The saint hath been merciful, and all my family is delighted.' ² There can thus be little doubt that Guru Arjan himself believed that the birth of Hargobind was due to the kindly intercession of a holy man, presumably Bhai Budha.

Hargobind, however, was not born in Amritsar but at a village called Wadali about seven miles distant. We are told that at the instigation of Prithia a revenue officer of the district named Sulahi Khan prepared to attack Amritsar under the pretence of levying tribute and anticipating the troubles and annoyance the Guru retired to Wadali where he remained for two years. His stay there seems to have been, more or less, uneventful, excepting the part that he is said to have played in amicably settling the disputes between Wadali

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 33.

² *Ibid*, p. 36.

and the neighbouring villages.¹ The Sikh records, however, state that even in his retirement he was incessantly troubled by the intrigues of Prithia. The birth of an heir to Guru Arjan had proved too much for Prithia and his wife and it is said that they planned to murder the child. They got hold of an old nurse of the family, and persuaded her, on promise of a reward of one hundred rupees, to go to Wadali and poison the child. 'The deceitful nurse went home, applied poison to the nipples of her breast, mixed some more in a medicine called gurhti given to infants in the East and proceeded to Wadali.' It so happened that Hargobind was at that time suffering from some temporary illness and refused to suckle. Ganga was very much pleased at the coming of the old nurse at this crisis and, deceived by her specious words, entrusted the child to her. The nurse at first tried the medicine but the child would not take it. Then she opened her breast and offered it to the child but it was refused again. Thereupon the nurse fainted and fell backwards. When she regained her senses she was so much overwhelmed with terror that she gave out the designs of Prithia. It is further stated that the Guru's brother next got hold of a snake-charmer and persuaded him to kill Hargobind by exposing him to a cobra. But the plot failed again. When the snake was let loose Hargobind is said to have taken it in his hand and killed it immediately.² These stories clearly illustrate how in the later Sikh chronicles incidents of doubtful authenticity have been freely

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 34.

² *Ibid*, pp. 36-39 ; *Sūraj Prakāś, Rās*, III, vii.

introduced into the body of the narrative, making it sometimes almost impossible to get at the facts. But of this more anon.

Guru Arjan returned to Amritsar in 1597 when Hargobind was two years old but he was not destined to remain in peace. It appears that soon after Hargobind was attacked with small-pox and the hymns written by the Guru on the occasion show the intense anxiety of the father and, at the same time, his implicit reliance on God's name at this hour of crisis. Guru Arjan says:

“ I have ever and ever repeated God's name,
And God Himself hath preserved my child.
The small-pox is stayed ;
Our troubles are removed by God's name.” ¹

And in the fulness of his heart he attributes the child's recovery entirely to the grace of God. We are told :

“ God hath protected the honour of His servant.
The Guru gave the medicine of God's name, and all
the fever hath departed.
God of His mercy hath preserved Hargobind.” ²

But as soon as this calamity was over Prithia engineered another plot to ensure the succession of his own son to the *gaddi*. This time he is said to have entered into a conspiracy with Hargobind's 'male nurse' who was a Brahman by caste. We are told that the nurse succeeded in putting some poison into a cup of milk intended for the child but he could not persuade

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 43.

² *Ibid*, p. 44.

Hargobind to drink it. When he persisted in his attempt the child began to cry and this brought Guru Arjan to the scene. He suspected foul play and gave a portion of the milk to a dog which instantly died. At this discovery the Brahman is said to have been seized with colic. He confessed his intention of poisoning the child at Prithia's instigation and soon afterwards expired. This incident also, no doubt, in some respects resembles the previous attempts of Prithia to murder Hargobind but it stands on an entirely different footing. In one of his hymns Guru Arjan notices it and there can thus be little doubt about its basic truth. The Guru says :

“ The poison produced no impression whatever on him ;
 The evil Brahman died of the colic.
 The Supreme Being Himself preserved his servant,
 The sinner died by the Guru's power.” ¹

It may not, therefore, be improbable that the stories of the female nurse and the snake-charmer were later embellishments reared on the edifice supplied by the remarks of the Guru, particularly as it is not difficult to trace therein the influence of *Kṛṣṇaite* legends.²

However, the discovery of this outrageous project must have put Prithia in a very uncomfortable position and we are told that in order to anticipate any charge that the Guru might make against him he set out with

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 47.

² Cf. the legends of the nurse Putanā sent by Kāṁsa to kill Kṛṣṇa and also the story of Kṛṣṇa's having saved the life of Nanda by killing a serpent. (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 6, 34.)

his family for Delhi. In vain did Mahadev, the Guru's second brother, remonstrate with him and equally fruitless was the attempt at reconciliation made by Guru Arjan himself who sent Bhai Gurdas to Hehar where, on his way to Delhi, Prithia had gone on a visit to his friend Sulahi Khan.¹ In due time Prithia and Sulahi Khan went to Delhi and a memorial is said to have been presented before the Emperor. Akbar 'decided in first place that he would not interfere in the affairs of religious men, and secondly that the memorial was false.' In a hymn of his the Guru seems to refer to this incident though the Emperor is not expressly mentioned. He attributes the discomfiture of Prithia to the grace of God 'who himself showed the memorial to be false,' and adds that 'Prithia is involved in the consequences of his own acts.'²

This proved a crushing blow to Prithia and he seems to have been so much disheartened that, at least for some time, he ceased to annoy the Guru. This respite was of the greatest importance as it enabled the Guru to turn once more to that wholesome work of consolidation which he had begun with such promise during the earlier part of his career. And the work that he now commenced may very well be regarded as the crowning achievement of his life. This was nothing less than the compilation of the *Granth Sāhib*. Macauliffe says, "Guru Arjan now felt the necessity of laying down rules for the guidance of his followers in the performance of their daily religious duties and

¹ *Sūraj Prakāś, Ras.* III, xviii-xxv.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 49.

expiatory rites. This course would reduce his religion to consistency, and hinder divergent tenets and rituals. That consummation, however, could only be attained when the exact words of the Gurus were permanently recorded in one grand volume.”¹ It is further stated that information reached the Guru to the effect that Prithia had begun the compilation of a *Granth* in which he was trying to pass his own compositions as those of Guru Nanak and steps to meet this arrogant encroachment could no longer be delayed. But apart from these considerations an authoritative compilation of the hymns of the successive Gurus had become a matter of vital necessity. In the practical side of Sikhism the most obvious religious exercise enjoined on the followers had been the singing of hymns in praise of the True One and it had also been laid down that only the real hymns of the Gurus should be used for the purpose. For instance, Guru Amar Das says:

“Come, ye disciples, beloved of the true Guru, sing a true song.

Sing a song of the Guru, the song of songs.
Saith Nanak, ever sing this true song.”

And he adds:

“Without the true Guru every song is false,
Every song is false without the true Guru.
They who utter it are false, they who hear it are false, and false is its author.”²

And we have already seen that the work of collecting and compiling the hymns of the Gurus had made

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 55.

² *Ibid* (*Anand*. xxiii, xxiv), p. 124.

considerable progress during his pontificate. But this had necessarily been incomplete and were now practically inaccessible to the generality of the Sikh public. The compilation that Guru Arjan now planned was thus clearly a desideratum and its completion furnished the coping-stone to his strenuous work of organisation.

Naturally Guru Arjan's first object was to secure the previous compilation which, he knew, was in the custody of Mohan, one of the sons of Guru Amar Das. It appears that the Guru sent Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Budha, one after another, for the purpose but they both failed and then Guru Arjan went to Mohan in person. The Sikh writers have enshrouded the story in a veil of mystery but it seems that the failure of the two emissaries had shown the Guru that a little diplomacy was needed and after some initial difficulties he did at last succeed in getting the object of his desire. In the ecstasy of his delight the Guru wrote:

"I am wealthy and fortunate in the true name.

I sing God's praises with composure and love.

When I opened and saw my father and grandfather's treasury of *sacred books*

My soul was enriched.

My store-houses were filled with gems and rubies
Inestimable, inexhaustible, and unweighable.

O my brethren, let us eat and spend this wealth together." ¹

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 58. We are told that this manuscript is still found at Goindwal and that the order of the *Granth Sāhib* was at least in part suggested by it. Guru Arjan is said to have used another manuscript which 'was seen by Gyan Singh with a woman who lived in Katra Mahan Singh at Amritsar.' Further, on the authority of the *Tavarikh-Khalsa* Mohan Singh saysth at "in response to a general

To these were now added Guru Arjan's own compositions, which were very numerous and formed by far the major portion of the entire collection when it was finally completed. Further, the Guru made selections from the compositions of various *bhagats* or saints, both Hindu and Muhammadan, whose teachings agreed with those of the Sikh Gurus in their fundamentals, and incorporated them in the *Granth*. Lastly we are told that "several bards who had accepted the Sikh religion appeared before the Guru, and offered him panegyrics of himself and his predecessors. The Guru graciously gave such compositions a place in the sacred volume." The huge amount of material thus collected was then written out by Bhai Gurdas at the dictation of Guru Arjan and after much arduous labour the work was at last completed in A.D. 1604. The *Granth Sāhib*,¹ as it came to be called, was placed in the Har Mandir with Bhai Budha in charge.

invitation issued by Guru Arjan Dev to the holders of MSS. containing the poetry of the previous four Gurus, one Bhai Bhakta, of Arora caste, belonging to Jalal Pur, in the *Paragana* of Hasan Abdal, produced a huge tome containing the *Bani* of the first four Sikh Gurus and much other poetry besides, which was duly used by Guru Arjan Dev, the said MS. having been finally returned to the owner. It is further stated that the MS. was a priceless heirloom in the family as it had been completed contemporaneously with the respective Gurus whose autographs were obtained. The signatures of the first four Gurus were shown to the fifth Guru who gave his own signature. The signatures of the other, later Gurus, are also said to be present in the MS. which was stated by Gyan Singh, the author of the *Tavārikh*, to be then in the custody of one Buta Singh Pasari of Rawalpindi. (*Kabir and the Bhagti Movement*, Vol. I, pp. 49, 79.)"

¹ It is also called the *Adi Granth* to distinguish it from the *Dasam Pātshāh kā Granth*, or the Book of the tenth King, i.e., Guru Gobind Singh.

This closes the history of Guru Arjan's achievements as a peaceful organiser. But almost all modern writers state that Guru Arjan also did something to foster trade and industry among the members of his community. This is quite conceivable and there seems nothing improbable in it. The Sikhs had become purely a community of householders and the Gurus were never tired of emphasising the dignity of labour and of all honest avocations.¹ But the matter has been carried much further. Particular stress has been laid on the alleged fact that Guru Arjan encouraged his followers to engage in horse trade with countries beyond the Indus and one writer in particular has taken considerable pains to explain the importance and possible effects of this step. It has been suggested that

¹ Teja Singh very rightly emphasises this aspect of the Guru's work (*Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism*, pp. 29-32) but it seems that in his enthusiasm he has overstepped the limit. For instance, we are told that "the creation of an intelligent middle class was (as it still is) the crying need of the time. The society in India was so constituted as to give no scope to the development of arts and industries. The rigid caste rules had made it impossible for the men of higher castes to take part in the cultivation of arts and sciences. They stood aloof and left the sweating work to be done by the so-called lower castes." This is only another instance of the present-day tendency of attributing all the ills of India to the caste-system but facts speak otherwise. To say that the higher classes took no part in the cultivation of arts and sciences is to ignore plain facts and there is enough material in the Sikh records themselves to show that the higher classes, particularly the Khatri, were traders *par excellence* long before Sikhism made its influence felt. There might have been some apathy on the part of men of ability and talent to take to producing but, as Moreland points out (*From Akbar to Aurangzib*, p. 233), the chief reason for that was not the 'social constitution of India' but the revenue policy of the administration, which reacted unfavourably on production.

the Guru's motive was political and that 'it is likely that the trade, or at any rate a considerable part of it, was carried on with public funds of the community, and the major portion of the profits therefore went to the funds of the church.'¹ As Cunningham says, "Nor was Arjun heedless of other means of acquiring wealth and influence; he dispatched his followers into foreign countries to be as keen in traffic as they were zealous in belief, and it is probable that his transactions as a merchant were extensive, although confined to the purchase of horses in Turkestan."² In similar strain Trumpp says that the Guru engaged in trade in grand style³ and he is almost echoed by Irvine.⁴ But it appears to us that the matter has been treated rather carelessly and, so far as we are aware, there is no clear and reliable evidence in support of these contentions. Cunningham remarks that 'the ordinary Sikh accounts are to this effect' but it is evident that he does not attach any great value to these. He also refers to the *Dabistān*, but the passage which he undoubtedly means clearly refers to the *masands* and not to the Gurus, though the word 'guru' is used.⁵ Moreover, there is nothing here about trade in horses or

¹ Narang, *op. cit.*, pp 35, 36.

² Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

³ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxi.

⁴ Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I, p. 76.

⁵ Mohsin Fani says that the Sikhs established that an *udāsī* or one that has abandoned the world, is not to be esteemed higher than any other man. 'On that account, some of their Gurus are inclined to agriculture, others to commerce, and to various trades and occupations' (*Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 272). Cunningham apparently deduced a dubious conclusion from this passage and it seems that all subsequent writers have followed him without looking closely into the matter.

Guru Arjan's participation in it. In another connection, not noticed by Cunningham, Mohsin Fani speaks of a Sikh named Sadah who had been sent by Guru Hargobind to bring horses from Balkh. He brought three beautiful Irak horses for his master but they were seized by a tyrant named Khalil Beg.¹ It should be noted that in this instance the horses were ordered to be brought for the Guru's own sake and there is absolutely no suggestion of any trade in the affair. Moreover, trade in horses was no new thing. It is stated in the *Janamsākhīs* that Guru Nanak's father Kalu had once asked him to be a dealer in horses and in his characteristic fashion Nanak replied :

“ Make thy hearing of the sacred books thy merchandise,—truth the horses thou takest to sell ;

Tie up virtues as thy travelling expense and think not in thy heart of to-morrow.

When thou arrivest in the land of God, thou shalt obtain happiness in his abode.”²

These verses clearly show that even in the days of Nanak trading in horses by men of his class was not an uncommon event and consequently a few isolated instances of later days cannot be regarded as in any way conclusive unless it can be shown by direct evidence that Guru Arjan had actually encouraged and himself taken part in the lucrative horse trade with Balkh and Irak.

But trade or no trade, Guru Arjan's achievements had been solid enough and we are told that during the

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 284.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 23.

closing years of his life his enemies again combined and made a determined attempt to bring about his ruin. The inveterate Prithia had in the meantime been greatly weakened by the accidental death of his friend and patron, Sulahi Khan. It is said that 'one day Prithia took Sulahi to admire some brick-kilns he had made. On arriving, Sulahi's horse started at the accidental flight of a bird from under his feet, and ran with his rider straight into a kiln in full blast. In a few minutes horse and rider became a mass of cinders.' ¹ But this loss was more than made up by an unexpected recruit of a much more formidable character to the ranks of the Guru's enemies. This was Chandu Shah, an imperial Dewan, who appears to have been an inhabitant of Lahore but whose official duties necessitated his residence at Delhi. The story runs that he had sought the hands of the Guru's son Hargobind for his daughter Sada Kaur but the Guru refused the alliance primarily because his Delhi Sikhs were averse to the proposal. It is said that the proposed alliance was not at all to Chandu's liking as he considered the Guru to be a person of inferior status, particularly as he was dependent on offerings for his subsistence. But the

¹ In a hymn in *Bilāval* Guru Arjan refers to this incident. Says the Guru :

"God preserved me from Sulahi.

Sulahi by no means succeeded; Sulahi died unclean.

God drew forth his axe and smote off his head and in a moment he became ashes.

He was consumed ever meditating evil; He who created him thrust him into the fire."

(Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 86.)

See also *Sūraj Prakās*, Rās IV, xviii.

importunities of his wife proved too much for him and he at last gave his consent. However, it seems that Chandu's offensive remarks had reached the ears of the local Sikhs who became very much annoyed and immediately sent a messenger post-haste with a letter to the Guru requesting him urgently to refuse the alliance. The result of the whole matter was that Chandu's proposal was rejected and in the very presence of his emissaries Hargobind was triumphantly betrothed to a daughter of Narain Das and next to that of Hari Chand. This was an insult¹ which Chandu took seriously to heart and henceforth he became the deadliest enemy of the Guru. And, according to Sikh tradition, it was not long before he was sought out by Prithia and his friends and a grand combination against the Guru arranged.²

It is said that Prithia succeeded in persuading the Kazis and Brahmins to lay a complaint against the Guru on the ground that the *Granth* compiled by him blasphemed both the Hindus and the Muhammadans and through the influence of Chandu the memorial was duly placed before the Emperor. At the Emperor's order the *Granth* was brought before him together with Bhai Budha and Bhai Gurdas who deputed for the Guru. After some discussion the Emperor became convinced that the complaint against the Guru was totally groundless and the deputies were dismissed with dresses of honour for themselves

¹ Narang says (*op. cit.*, p. 40, f.n.) that "under a mistaken notion of honour, a noble Khatri could not brook to marry his daughter to any one else, after a bridegroom for her had been once selected."

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 81-82.

and their Guru. And we are further told that the discomfiture of the conspirators became complete when the Emperor next paid a visit to the Guru and in compliment to him remitted the revenues of the Punjab for that year.

This is the Sikh tradition as we find it embodied in the later Sikh chronicles but the story in all its details can hardly be acceptable unless we find it corroborated by some independent and more reliable testimony. The stories of these deputations to Akbar are by no means few and we must not ignore the possibility that some at least might have been inspired by Akbar's well-known toleration and his predilection for saints and fakirs. But it must be pointed out that with regard to Akbar's alleged visit to Guru Arjan we possess some independent evidence. Macauliffe says, "Badaoni states that on another occasion, namely, the thirteenth of the month of Azur (Jamadi ul sani), Akbar, with a gorgeous military retinue, crossed the Bias and went to Goindwal to visit Guru Arjan, whose teaching and character he appreciated."¹ This seems to establish the visit and the *Khulasat-t-Tawarikh* says distinctly that a small portion of the revenues was also actually remitted at the request of Guru Arjan. Sujan Rai states that "when Akbar left Lahore and reached Batala he came to know that a fight had taken place between Musalman Fakirs and Sannyāsis. He went to the spot and put to prison the Musalman Fakirs who had done injustice and had broken some of the temples. He ordered the temples to be repaired and from there he

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 84.

crossed the Bias and visited the house of Guru Arjan, a disciple and successor of Baba Nanak and he was very much pleased when he recited some of the poems of Baba Nanak about the unity of the Godhead. The Guru expressed his obligation to the Emperor for his visit and at the time of his departure represented to him that in the Punjab the price of corn had gone up and the people found it difficult to pay the revenue. The Emperor accepted his request and issued orders to his officers to reduce the revenue by one-tenth or one-twelfth."¹ The Sikh tradition is thus substantially corroborated though, as we have pointed out before, it is difficult to accept it in its entirety.

Looked at from the secular point of view this visit of the Emperor and his partial remission of the revenues at the Guru's request must be regarded as the highwater-mark in Arjan's career. But almost immediately afterwards his fortunes set on the ebb and brought his career to a tragic and lamentable end. That incident, however, was the first of a series of events that brought in a new phase of development and belongs more properly to the history of the transition to militarism under Guru Arjan's son and successor, Hargobind. We have been concerned till now in tracing the history of the development of the Sikh *Panth* since Sikhism was first brought into being by the bold and unequivocal declaration of Guru Nanak that 'there is no Hindu and no Musalman'; and the first phase may be said to have ended in 1604, the year in which the *Granth Sāhib* was compiled

¹ *Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh* (Zafar Hasan's edition), p. 425.

and placed in the Har Mandar. The progress hitherto had been almost entirely peaceful with practically no interference from the established state, which, on the contrary, had on occasions been friendly and helpful. In the new epoch that was about to commence circumstances entirely changed, methods became openly violent and the state stood out in determined opposition. But it is needless to point out that the new was based on and conditioned by the old and before we pass on to the new epoch it is thus necessary that we should take stock of what had already been achieved and acquaint ourselves more thoroughly with Sikh ideals and institutions.

CHAPTER VI

IDEALS AND INSTITUTIONS

Tradition affirms that towards the close of his life Guru Nanak began a systematic trial of his followers. His object, no doubt, was to discover the person who was qualified above all others to bear the burden of the Guruship after his death and we are told that the trial generally took the form of apparently unreasonable commands at unseasonable times by Guru Nanak to those around him. Thus, on one occasion, in a winter's night when heavy rain was falling, a part of the wall of the Guru's house was demolished and he expressed his desire that it should be immediately repaired. His sons very naturally said that that was not the proper time for doing the work and that in the morning they would call masons and labourers and have the wall repaired. But Nanak would not hear of it ; he said that the Guru's work must be performed by his Sikhs and that there was no necessity to wait for masons and labourers. At this reiterated command of the Guru ' everybody was silent except Lahina (afterwards Angad) who at once stood up and began to repair the wall. The Guru's sons and other Sikhs went off to sleep.' But for Lahina this was only the beginning of his trial. After some time the Guru came to inspect the work, expressed his dissatisfaction and asked Lahina to pull it down and begin again from the beginning. This was

repeated several times till at last the Guru's sons could hold their patience no longer and told Lahina plainly that 'he was a fool to obey unreasonable orders.' In all humility Lahina replied that 'a servant should make his hands useful by doing his master's work.'¹ There the matter apparently ended and it is needless to state that the point of the story lies in its illustration of the virtue of implicit obedience to the Guru.

There are several other stories of the kind but we would content ourselves by noticing only one other, wherein we are given the traditional explanation as to how the name Lahina was changed to Angad and which we find incorporated in the oldest *Janamsākhī*. The story runs that one day Gorakhnath,² who by the way was dead several centuries back, came to Guru Nanak and congratulated him on 'the wide diffusion of his name.' The Guru said that Gorakhnath would soon see how many of these alleged votaries really belonged to the Guru and then a very extraordinary thing happened. Guru Nanak came out of his house with the alleged 'votaries of the Name' as well as Gorakhnath and proceeded in a certain direction. In the meantime the ground, at successive stages, had been strewn by the order of the Lord with copper, silver and gold coins and at the first stage when they reached the place with the copper coins scattered broadcast many of the votaries took the coins and went away. The silver and the gold coins proved too much for most of those who had still

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 6.

² Evidently the founder of the sect of the Jogīs is meant.

been in the party till at last when they reached a funeral pyre two only of the votaries remained. Upon the funeral pyre 'four lamps were burning, a sheet was spread over it, under which a dead one was lying, but a stench was coming from him.' Guru Nanak asked the two disciples whether any of them was ready to eat the corpse. One of them turned his face and left the place in disgust and then Lahina, who alone had stuck to the last, asked the Guru: 'O Sir, from which side shall I apply my mouth?' On being told to begin from the side of the feet, Lahina lifted the sheet when he found that Guru Nanak was lying there asleep. Thereupon Gorakhnath said: 'O Nanak, he is thy Guru, who will be produced from thy body,' and the name Lahina was changed to Angad.¹ The story may be absurd and even ridiculous but it is interesting to note the points that the chronicler wants to make

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, pp. xliii-xliv.

Apart from these stories, the main fact that Guru Nanak had actually tested his followers in order to find out the man who was best qualified to succeed him is testified to by the Coronation Ode. It says that 'Lahina obeyed the orders of Guru Nanak whether necessary or unnecessary' and further that 'Lahina obeyed what the Guru had ordered him, and earned the reward of his acts.' We are also told:

"He tested his Sikhs and his sons, and the whole sect saw what he had done.

It was when Lahina was purified that Guru Nanak consecrated him."

And we also get clear hints as to why the name Lahina was changed to Angad. Angad literally means "of the body" and the Coronation Ode says, 'A scion of Guru Nanak exchanged bodies with him and took possession of his throne,' and that Guru Nanak's light blended with Guru Angad's, and Guru Nanak became absorbed in him. The idea no doubt is that Angad was the same in essence as Guru Nanak. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 26, 27.)

out. Here again Angad alone comes out of the ordeal and the test that he is put to is the implicit and unconditional surrender to the Guru.

Coming next to the nomination of Amar Das to the Guruship we are again introduced to several incidents of the type narrated above. But we would notice only one which is said to have finally confirmed Guru Angad in his determination to nominate Amar Das to the Guruship. It was again a dark rainy night, 'cold winds blew, lightning flashed, and every human being was glad to find shelter in his house and go to sleep.' On such a night as this, when three hours were still to pass before daylight could be expected to break, the Guru called out for water. Nobody heeded him. The Guru then awakened one of his sons and asked him to fetch water but he showed no inclination to obey. At this Amar Das came forward and cheerfully volunteered to go to the river to bring water for his master. The Guru objected on the ground that Amar Das was too old a man for such service but the objection was waived and the devoted disciple put a pitcher on his head and started for the river. After some adventures in the impenetrable darkness of the night Amar Das returned with the pitcher of water all right and it seems that the very next day he was invested with the insignia of Guruship.¹ Thus it is clear that, according to Sikh tradition, the *sine qua non* of eligibility to the Guruship, or in other words, the essential requisite of an ideal Sikh was implicit surrender to the Guru, 'sacrificium intellectus' as Trumpp would call it.²

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 42, 43.

² Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxvii.

In the case of Ram Das tradition shifts its ground. The old point is not abandoned. It is stressed as before and we are told that 'Jetha performed such unremitting service day and night that he allowed himself no repose of mind and body.' But the point that now comes to the forefront is the outstanding fact that the Guruship became hereditary in the line of Ram Das. This required explanation as well as justification and we are introduced to several interesting stories and legends for the purpose. These are independent of one another but in different ways all seek to explain the fact of hereditary succession. The first story begins in the old style and exhibits in full the extreme devotion and obedience of Ram Das to his Guru. It is said that one day Guru Amar Das ordered each of his two sons-in-law, Rama and Jetha, to build a platform by the side of the *Bawali*. When the platforms were completed the Guru went to inspect them and exactly as Guru Nanak had done with the wall of Lahina, expressed his dissatisfaction and asked them to pull the platforms down and build them anew. With great reluctance Rama built his for the second time and when he was again told that the work was not satisfactory he flatly refused to obey any further what he called the Guru's whims. But Jetha continued to break and build seven times in succession till at last the Guru was satisfied and blessed him in the following terms: "Obeying my order seven times hast thou built the platform, so seven generations of thine shall sit on the Guru's throne." ¹

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 142, 143.

As we have said, the story is in the old style but the denouement is new.

In the second instance, the matter is approached in a different manner and the hereditary succession is made to appear as the reward of the wholehearted service and devotion of Jetha's wife Bibi Bhani. The story runs that one day as the Guru was absorbed in deep meditation Bibi Bhani entered his room and saw that one of the legs of the Guru's couch was broken and might give way at any moment. She at once put her hand under the broken leg and kept the couch level so that the Guru might not be disturbed in his meditation. When he awoke the Guru expressed great satisfaction at what she had done and invited her to ask a reward. Bibi Bhani is said to have implored that the Guruship should be made hereditary in her family and the request was granted but the Guru added that she had dammed the clear flowing stream of the Guruship and consequently great trouble and annoyance would result ; no doubt a prophecy *ex eventu*.¹

It will be seen that in both the above cases the Guruship is still the reward of devotion and obedience, only that now the distinction is made hereditary whereas in the cases of Angad and Amar Das it had been merely personal. But the legend that we are now about to narrate goes deeper into the hoary past and presents the matter in a setting in which contemporary events and personalities play practically no part. Moreover, this legend appears to be the oldest of the series as we find a clear hint regarding it in

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 144.

Bhai Gurdas and the story is fully developed by Guru Gobind Singh in his *Bacitra Nāṭak*. Speaking of the nomination of Ram Das to the Guruship Bhai Gurdas remarks :

“ What he previously received must be restored, and descend to the line that owneth it.

The Sodhi king Ram Das sat on the throne, and was called the true Guru.”

And again,

“ The Sodhis will not allow it to depart ; no others can endure the unendurable thing.

What belongeth to the house shall remain in the house.” ¹

It appears that both the verses hint at some previous arrangement or something of the kind, though what that might be is by no means clear. We are, however, inclined to think that in his usual cryptic manner Bhai Gurdas is here referring to the well-known legend which is narrated in great detail in the *Bacitra Nāṭak*. The origin of the Sodhi family is traced to the time-honoured line of Raghu to which belonged the celebrated hero of the Ramayana. Lahu and Kusu (Lava and Kusu), the two sons of Rama are said to have built the two cities of Lahore and Kassur, which were named after them. The descendants of these two kings continued to wield sceptres for a long time and lived in harmony till the days of Kalket and Kalrai. Kalket (descended from Kusu) is said ‘ to have possessed peerless strength ’ and had no difficulty in expelling Kalrai (descended from Lahu) from the city.

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 47.

The latter fled to the Sanaudh country where he married a king's daughter. To him a son named Sodhi Rai was born and the Sodhi race began from that time. The Sodhis gradually became independent and influential, conquered many countries and at last invaded the Punjab. The descendants of Kusu were defeated, and, in their turn, fled to Benares where in course of time they became the readers of the *Veds* and came to be known as the Vedis. Another turn in the wheel of fortune came. To patch up past differences the Sodhi king of the Punjab wrote a conciliatory letter to the Vedi chief and invited him and his followers to come back to the Punjab. The Vedi chief complied with the request. On the arrival of the Vedis the Sodhi king asked them to recite the *Veds*. They obeyed. The king was very much pleased, gave all his possessions to the Vedis and assuming the garb of a Rikhi retired to the forest to become absorbed in God's love. The Vedi chief blessed the Sodhi king, saying, "When I come in the Kali Age under the name of Nanak I will make thee worthy of worship in the world. And thou shalt attain the highest dignity." And the blessing was fulfilled when Guru Amar Das gave the Guruship to Ram Das Sodhi, in whose line it became hereditary.¹

The fundamental ideal of surrender and service is absent here and the sole concern of the legend is to provide a sort of historical justification for succession to the Guruship on grounds of heredity. The Guruship

¹ *Bacitra Nāṭak*, II-V. The Sanaudh country is said to be near Benares. According to Macauliffe, 'its inhabitants, the Sanaudhis, were afterwards called Sodhis' (*op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 291, f.n.).

is now declared to be an inalienable dignity which of right belonged to the Sodhi house and the prophecy of Bhai Gurdas that ' the Sodhis will not allow it to depart ' was, as we know, literally fulfilled. That hereditary succession had become a settled and unalterable practice is also clearly shown by a hymn which Guru Arjan evidently wrote on the birth of his son Hargobind. The Guru makes no secret of the fact that he had been most earnestly desiring the birth of an heir and he is profuse in his gratification that God had at last granted him the favour. But the point with which we are more particularly concerned is the fact that he regards this birth of a son as a momentous event in the history of Sikhism. " God hath erected the machinery of the faith," ¹ says he. The Guru's satisfaction was no doubt, to some extent, due to the fact that Prithia's chances had now become remote. Arjan's being childless had considerably facilitated Prithia's intrigues and we have seen that the birth of Hargobind had so completely upset him that he did not hesitate to stoop even to murderous designs. On the other hand, the Guru's remarks leave little doubt that it was now too late in the day even for him to think of alienating the succession by nominating to the Guruship a devoted and ideal Sikh, a person, for instance, like Bhai Gurdas, to whose writings he had even offered the honour of incorporation in the *Holy*.

¹ *Asā*, Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 35. . We have in the original ' *dharamkalā Hari bandhi bahālī*.' Trumpp renders ' *dharamkalā* ' by ' lustre of religion ' (*op. cit.*, p. 557). It seems that Trumpp takes *kalā* as in sixteen *kalās* or phases of the moon and hence derives ' lustre.' But as *kalā* is also used in the sense of a machine Macauliffe's rendering seems more accurate.

Granth and which the latter had, only in his extreme humility, refused. The Guruship had become the inalienable privilege of the house of Ram Das and that is why Arjan equates the birth of Hargobind with 'the erection of the machinery of the faith,' or in other words, the continued existence and progress of Sikhism.

It thus appears that the circumstances attending successive nominations to the Guruship can no longer be regarded as affording infallible clues to our comprehension of the characteristics of an ideal and perfect Sikh. The rule of primogeniture, no doubt, was never strictly followed and, it still remained the practice to nominate the best available man.¹ Further, the Sikh records claim that the fundamental ideal of surrender and devotion continued to play throughout the same prominent part in this all-important matter of nomination to the Guruship but, as the field from which the choice was to be made had been narrowed down to a single family and it is not in the least unlikely that the characters of the disgruntled candidates were unjustly blackened in the Sikh records, this line of approach has now perforce to be abandoned.

But fortunately for us this would make no material difference. The one point that we have been able to pick up so far, *viz.*, the ideal of surrender and devotion, is sufficiently attested by other and more reliable

¹ As Narang says, "it is remarkable that even when succession became hereditary the best available men were appointed to the Masnad of Guruship." Even the child of eight, Guru Harkrishan, 'made the best choice, passing over his own brother and uncle' (*op. cit.*, p. 65, f.n.).

evidence. It has already been pointed out that in Nanak's system the Guru formed the pivot on which everything else hinged. The disciple was asked to walk in the path of God, to remain ever content with His will and to obey His commands. But in these matters, as in everything else, the Guru was to point out the right path, he was to interpret the will of God and the commands of the Almighty were also to issue forth through the medium of his ordinances. The Guru, therefore, was to be implicitly obeyed. In the *Granth Sahib* this is emphasised again and again. Guru Nanak says:

“ If thou desire to play at love with me,
Come my way with thy head in the palm of thy hand.
Put thy feet on this road ;
Give thy head and regard not human opinion.”¹

Here is a demand for complete self-sacrifice. In the same strain Guru Amar Das asks his disciples to entrust body, soul and wealth to the Guru and obey his order if they really wanted to succeed.² Guru Ram Das says:

“ Sikhs of the Guru and friends, walk in God's way.
Faithfully obey what the Guru preacheth ;
Hear, servants of God and brethren, serve the Guru
very promptly.
Tie up service to the Guru as thy travelling ex-
penses to God ;
Think not of to-day or to-morrow.”³

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 382.

² *Ibid*, Vol. II, p. 120.

³ *Ibid*, p. 325.

Such verses might be almost indefinitely multiplied. We may take it therefore that the ideal of absolute surrender to the Guru was one of the fundamental principles of Sikhism. As Bhai Gurdas graphically puts it—‘ To be a Sikh was to be dead.’ He was to regard himself as a purchased slave fit to be yoked to any work that may serve the Guru’s purpose.¹

And this was no idle precept. Sikh tradition is eloquent on the subject and many are the instances of single-minded devotion that are remembered and honoured with just and reasonable pride. But apart from that the point is very clearly illustrated by several anecdotes preserved by Mohsin Fani in his *Dabistān*. We have already noticed the case of Sadah who had been ordered by the Guru to bring horses from Irak and when he was still only a day’s journey from home he was informed that his son was dangerously ill and requested to go back and see him. Sadah answered: “ If he should die, there is wood enough in the house to burn him ; I went about the Guru’s business and I will not return.” The son died but he did not return.² This Sadah we may take as the type of what a Sikh was expected to be. The other instances recorded by Mohsin Fani are of a more extreme type and show that this ideal of implicit obedience was often carried to illogical lengths. We are told that there was a Sikh named Jahandas ‘who was high and proud in his speeches, not agreeable to any, indifferent to good and bad that might happen to him.’ One day the Guru noticed a wound in his foot and asked Jahandas not to

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, III, 18.

² *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 284.

envelop it too much and keep it raised. Jahandas kept his foot uncovered and suspended for three months and he gave up the practice only when he met the Guru again and the latter assured him that the order had been intended only as a precaution against the wound in his foot. On another occasion the Guru went into a garden and asked Jahandas to remain at the door. By accident the Guru returned by another door and Jahandas remained three days on his feet till at last the Guru was informed of it and called him away. Another day the Guru said to him: 'Tell the Sikhs to bring wood into the kitchen, that they may gain some remuneration.' The next day Jahandas did not appear. Suspecting some derangement of his brain the Guru and his Sikhs went out in search for him and found him with a bundle of wood on his shoulder. The Guru said: 'I have not ordered you to bear that.' Jahandas replied: 'You gave your orders to the Sikhs, a Sikh am I, and know not to be anything higher than they are.'¹ This Jahandas was evidently a man of unsound temperament and we need not take his eccentricities seriously. But the last case which we would now take up is of a more serious character and exhibits a perversion of mind which it is difficult to justify. One day the Guru expressed a passing fancy for a speaking parrot and it is said that a Sikh at once rushed to the owner of the bird and bartered his wife and daughter to secure it and present it to the Guru.² "The perversion of moral judgment," says Sarkar, "and the ignorance of the relative value of things, illustrated

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, pp. 282, 283.

² *Ibid*, p. 286.

by this anecdote and another that I have omitted for the sake of decency, are extreme ; but so too is the spirit of devotion among the followers of the Guru.”¹ Whatever that might be, there can, however, be little doubt that the ideal of implicit obedience to the Guru was a reality and not a mere text-book precept.

It is thus a matter of paramount importance to understand what the ‘Guru’ meant in Sikhism and what it stood for. It has already been seen that Guru Nanak had unequivocally declared that without the Guru there could be no salvation and on the whole it appears that in Nanak’s compositions the ‘Guru’ is to be taken as the vehicle of communion between God and man, the medium through which the *Word* and the grace of God are made available. The Guru is in possession of the immortal wealth and he alone can give it.² Without the *Word* none could be saved and it is the Guru who communicates the *Word*. The Guru is a ‘boat of salvation,’ a ladder to reach one’s home, a key to open the lock, a unifier of man with God and so on. He is thus an agent but he is the sole agent, for

“Man shall not be emancipated without the Guru’s instruction ; even though man performed hundreds of

¹ *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. III, p. 357.

We also cannot include the story for the same reason. Sarkar says, “It shows that the Sikhs of the middle 17th century held the same views about women that the Anabaptists of Munster did.” It seems to us that to condemn the whole Sikh community on the strength of two anecdotes preserved by a writer whom Cunningham characterises as ‘a garrulous and somewhat credulous Mahomedan’ (p. 27, f. n. 2) is, to say the least, uncritical and unjust.

² *Mājh kī Wār*, Mah. I, Slok I.

thousands of ceremonies, all would still be darkness without the Guru." ¹

But, at the same time the 'Guru' is presented in a rather impersonal aspect and it is probable that in certain instances 'God' is meant. In the *Japji* we read:

"The Guru is Shiv; the Guru is Vishnu and Brahma; the Guru is Parbati, Lakshmi, and Saraswati." ²

Bhai Kahn Singh says that this verse is to be taken to mean that there are no other gods or goddesses besides the Guru, who, in his own being, comprises them all.³ There are several other verses in which Nanak seems to speak of God as the Guru and Macauliffe ⁴ and Bhai Kahn Singh ⁵ have brought these under requisition to show that the founder of Sikhism recognised no earthly superior and that his Guru was God. Further, in another verse Nanak says that the Creator Himself possesses all knowledge and that He Himself spoke the *Word*.⁶ This again is a

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 302.

² *Japji*, V.

³ *Gurumat Prabhākar*, p. 326, f. n. But it seems that the verse may also be taken to mean that the divinities named are merely different manifestations of the one true Guru.

⁴ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 54, f. n. 1.

⁵ *Gurumat Prabhākar*, pp. 355, 356. Besides the verse in *Sorath*, *Mahala* I, to which Macauliffe refers, Kahn Singh adds two others: *Mārū*, *Mahala* I—*Hari guru murati ekā vartai*, Nanak *Hari guru bhāiā*; *Sūhī Astapadi*, *Mahala* IV—*satguru merā sadā sadā, nā āvai nā jāi, uha abina-sīpurakh hai, sabh mahi rahiā samāi*.

⁶ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

fresh viewpoint and it seems that here we have in germ the theory of the divine origin of Nanak's mission, a theory which, as we shall see, assumed considerable importance under his successors.

Thus, at the very outset, the Guruship was invested with a mystical halo and with the progress of time the mystery increased. But the original conception of the Guru as the mediator between man and God never lost ground. Guru Angad says :

“ The Guru hath the key of the lock, the heart is the store-room, the body is its roof ;

Nanak, without the Guru the doors of the heart cannot be opened, since nobody else hath the key.” ¹

The Guru is thus indispensable but he is not an end in himself but only a means, though the sole means, for the attainment of salvation. In the *Ānand* Guru Amar Das writes :

“ Whoever turneth away from the true Guru, shall not obtain salvation without him ;

Nor shall he obtain salvation elsewhere—go inquire of persons of discrimination—

He shall wander in many births, and not obtain deliverance without the true Guru ;

But he shall at last obtain deliverance by attaching himself to the feet of the true Guru who will communicate to him the Word.

Saith Nanak, thoroughly reflect on this—There can be no deliverance without the true Guru.” ²

Here again the Guru is the communicator of the *Word*, through which alone deliverance can be obtained. Ram Das compares the Guru to a wholesale merchant who deals in the *Name* and ferries across the retail dealers, *i.e.*, the disciples by means of the *Word*.¹ The Guru is the mediator or the intercessor² and 'without the true Guru God's name is not found even though one perform hundreds of thousands and millions of ceremonies.'³ It does not seem necessary to pursue the matter further; suffice it to say that even Bhai Gurdas, in whose hands the apotheosis of the Gurus almost reached its culmination, does not forget to lay stress on this aspect of the Guruship, though the idea of the intercessor is almost always mixed up with that of the founder of the true path and the saviour of the world.⁴

But this was nothing new, nor was it a special characteristic of Sikhism. The conception of the Guru as the mediator and the belief in his indispensableness are as old as the days of the Upaniṣads, if not older still, and they are stressed with equal emphasis by the various other teachers of the medieval school. The difference arose in other ways till at last the Guruship in Sikhism assumed a unique character. In the first place, it is important to note that most of the other sects of the medieval school, notably the *Kabir Panthīs*, allowed freedom of choice and inculcated the greatest care in the selection of a Guru.⁵

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 311.

² *Ibid*, p. 309.

³ *Ibid*, p. 287.

Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, XVI, 13; XXIV, 2.

Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. II, p. 546.

There was thus room in them for the simultaneous existence of a number of 'Gurus,' each exercising undisputed sway over his own immediate disciples but the position in Sikhism was radically different. The question of selection or choice did not arise at all as each successive Guru was nominated by his predecessor.¹ The Guru, moreover, came to occupy the position of a sole and supreme religious leader. Like the Roman Catholic Pope, the Islamic Khalif or the Tibetan Dalai Lama he was without a rival.

Secondly, we come to the peculiar Sikh conception that the Gurus were one and the same, there having been no change of spirit but only a change of image. It is stated in the old *Janamsākhī* that when Guru Nanak finally resolved to make Lahina his successor 'he put five Paisa before Guru Angad and fell down before his feet.'² In the *Tikke di Wār* or the Coronation Ode we are told that 'Guru Nanak in bowing to Guru Angad reversed the order of things.'³ If this was really so, if Guru Nanak had actually bowed down before Guru Angad, it must be regarded as a very significant fact. It shows that from the very beginning the impersonal character of the Guruship was recognised. The personality of the Guru was

¹ Forster suggests that the Sikh Gurus were elected (*Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 259, 260) and Mohsin Fani also says that 'the Guru is chosen at the discretion of his followers' (*Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 271). But Sikh tradition is unanimous that the Gurus themselves nominated their respective successors. The only approach to something like an election was in the case of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur.

² *Supra*, p. 92.

³ *Tikke di Wār*, IV; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 27.

detached from the spirit of the Guruship, which was to be regarded as one, indivisible and continuous. Further, the fact that the name Lahina was changed to Angad must be regarded as equally significant. Speaking of the nomination of Angad to the Guruship the Coronation Ode says, 'He had the same light, the same ways, the king merely changed his own body.'¹ The idea is stressed again and again in the Sikh writings and must be regarded as one of the cardinal doctrines of the Sikh faith. The Guruship was something apart from the personality of the Guru and this would explain how the successive Gurus could be regarded as identical. To quote again from the Coronation Ode, 'The wise being Guru Nanak descended in the form of Amar Das,'² and of Ram Das it is said, "Thou art Nanak, Thou art Lahina, Thou art Amar Das, so I deem thee."³ In Bhai Gurdas we find this idea stressed again and again, though in almost all cases he goes further and seeks an identity between the Guru and God.⁴ Mohsin Fani says, "they (the Sikhs) believe that, when

¹ *Tikke di Wār*, II; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 25.

² Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 59.

³ *Ibid*, p. 254.

See also, Bhai Kahn Singh's *Gurumat Prabhākar*, pp. 357, 358. *Rāmkalī*, *Mahala* I, *dīpāk* te *dīpāk* *pargāsīū*, *tṛbhuvan* *jot* *dikhāī*.

⁴ *Wār*, I, 45, 48; XIII, 25; XX, 2. At the very beginning of his *Kabits* Bhai Gurdas seeks to identify Guru Nanak with God, Angad with Nanak, Amar Das with Angad, and so on up to Guru Hargobind in whose time the book was evidently written. The relevant verses are as follows: *pār* *brahm* *pūran* *brahm* *satguru* *Nānak* *dev*; *guru* *Angad* *mil* *ang* *sang* *mil* *sang* *udhāras*; *satguru* *Amarpragās* *mil* *anmrit* *anmrit* *bha'e*; and so on.

Nanac expired, his spirit became incarnate in the person of Angad, who attended him as his confidential servant. Angad at his death transmitted his soul into the body of *Amar das* ; and this Guru, in the same manner, conveyed his spirit into the body of *Ramadas* ; whose soul transmigrated into the person of *Arjunmal* ; in short, they believe that, with a mere change of name, Nanac the First became Nanac the Second, and so on, to the Fifth in the person of *Arjunmal*. They say, that whoever does not recognise in *Arjunmal* the true Baba Nanac, is an unbeliever.”¹ In their hymns and compositions all the successive Gurus styled themselves ‘Nanak’ and from Mohsin Fani’s remark that in a letter written to him Guru Hargobind had actually signed as ‘Nanak’² it appears that they followed this practice also in their private correspondence. It is interesting to note that in the *Bahadur-Shah-nama* the tenth Guru is called ‘Guru Govind Nanak’³ and lastly, we may point out that in the *Bacitra Nālak* Guru Gobind Singh emphatically declares that the Gurus were one and that without understanding this perfection could not be obtained. Says the Guru :

“Nanak assumed the body of Angad,
And made his religion current in the world,
Afterwards Nanak was called Amar Das,
As one lamp is lit from another.

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, pp. 253-55.

² *Ibid*, p. 281.

³ Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I, p. 90.

The holy Nanak was revered as Angad,
 Angad was recognised as Amar Das,
 And Amar Das became Ram Das.
 The pious saw this, but not the fools,
 Who thought them all distinct ;
 But some rare person recognised that they were
all one
 They who understood this obtained perfection.
 Without understanding this perfection cannot be
obtained.”¹

There can thus be no room for doubt that in Sikh view the Guruship was impersonal, indivisible and continuous.

The Guruship, moreover, reveals other features when it is studied in relation to the *Word* and the *Name*. The meaning of these latter conceptions is by no means clear and there can be little doubt that in Sikh literature they have often been used in different senses. Teja Singh says, ‘ the *Name* is a term, like *logos* in Greek, bearing various meanings.’ Sometimes it stands for God Himself, sometimes it means God as revealed or His manifestation, and in a third sense the *Name* is ‘ the word recorded in the Holy Scripture.’² It might be added that apart from these theoretical interpretations the *Name* also stands for a more or less definite course of religious practice as in the well-known Sikh formula ‘ *nām, dān, isnān.*’ And instances may be found where it is used in the ordinary sense of the name of God as Sat, Hari and the like.³

¹ *Bacitra Nūtak*, V, 7-10. (The translation is Macauliffe’s.)

² Teja Singh, *Asa di Var*, pp. 126, 127; *The Japji* (Second Edition), pp. 77-79.

³ Bhai Kahn Singh, *Gurumat Prabhākar*, p. 471.

Similarly, the *Sabad* or the word lends itself to various interpretations. In its primary signification *Sabad* appears to mean the instruction communicated by the Guru to the disciple at the time of his initiation and in this sense it may be regarded as the equivalent of what is known as *mantra*. As Guru Amar Das says, a man can only be saved by attaching himself to the feet of the true Guru who will communicate the *Word* to him.¹ *Sabad* is thus communicated truth, and, in the first instance, more individualistic than communal in its scope and significance. This idea is never wholly lost but it is soon mixed up with others of a wider import. The *Word* soon comes to mean the essentials of Sikhism as propounded by Guru Nanak and his successors and finally its own concrete embodiment, *viz.*, the *Granth Sāhib*.² The *Sabad* and the *Nām* thus in a sense merge in the *Bānī* or the hymns of the Gurus. But the process does not stop here. In the next place, the *Word* is identified with the Guru³ and it is well known in what great reverence the incorporated *Word* has always been held in Sikhism, 'even the Guru choosing for himself a seat lower than

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 124.

² Bhai Kahn Singh, *Gurumat Prabhākar*, p. 151 ; Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. III, p. 122.

³ As Guru Ram Das says,

'The Word is the Guru and the Guru is the Word ; in the Word is the essence of ambrosia' (Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 339). Bhai Gurdas says that *Sabad* is the very image of the Guru (*Wār*, XXIV, 25; *guru mūrati guru sabad hai*; see also *Wār*, III, 4; VII, 20; XI, 2). It seems, however, that Bhai Gurdas goes farther and seeks an identity between the *Word* and God. (Cf. *Wār*, IX, 1, *pārbrahm guru sabad hai satsang nivāsī*.)

that of the Scripture.' The impersonal character of the Guruship is thus again emphasised and the creation of a sort of mystical identity between the *Guru* and the *Word* foreshadows the possibility of the abolition of the pontifical Guruship by Guru Gobind Singh.

Further, the Guruship was regarded as of divine origin, having its inauguration in the will of God. We have already pointed out how in the hands of Bhai Gurdas Guru Nanak becomes a divine instrument for the redemption of the world and it has also been seen how the idea is stressed even in the oldest *Janamsākhī*, as also in several of the stories recorded by Mohsin Fani in his *Dabistān*.¹ It can be traced in the writings of the Gurus as well and is developed in great detail in the *Bacitra Nāṭak*. Guru Ram Das says,

“O Guru's Sikhs, know that the true Guru's hymn is most true; the Creator Himself hath caused him to utter it.”²

And again, Guru Arjan writes,

“God gave Baba Nanak the word as an inexhaustible wealth to use and spend.”³

Other verses might also be quoted to show that in Sikh view it was God who sent the Guru to comfort the world and that it was by His grace that the Guru's

¹ *Supra*, pp. 62, 63, 69.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 305

³ *Ibid*, Vol. III, p. 444.

instruction had been promulgated.¹ Guru Gobind Singh narrates in detail the circumstances leading to his birth in this world and directly claims a divine sanction for his mission, though it is not quite clear as to whether he claims the same for his predecessors as well.² But this is nothing unusual ; some such idea is found more or less in almost all religious systems. And the other development, which may as well be regarded as its counterpart, *viz.*, the apotheosis of the Gurus, is also not a very rare occurrence. The idea of identity between God and the Guru is advanced in several verses of the *Granth Sāhib* and it reaches its culmination in the writings of Bhai Gurdas. It appears to us, however, that the matter is not always set forth in the same way and in the same sense. Guru Ram Das says,

“ I have churned the ocean of the body ; I have seen a rare thing come to view.

The Guru is God and God is the Guru ; Nanak, there is no difference between them, my brethen.”³

It should be noted that the identity spoken of here is not in the ordinary but in the ultimate sense and the Guru is careful to characterise its apprehension as ‘ a rare thing.’ Similarly when Guru Arjan says that the revered Guru is the creator, or that he is the Supreme Brahm, the Supreme God,⁴ it should be

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 119-20; see also Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 23.

² *Bacitra Nāṭak*, V, VI.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 312.

⁴ This is found in *Gaurī*, *Bāvanakharī*, *Mahalā* V. The whole of the first *slok* where it occurs appears to us extremely important as it

understood that here again the identity is one of ultimate essence and can have no reference to the Guru as a person, a man of flesh and blood. And the verse of Ram Das, quoted above, also makes it clear that the unity is of a mystical character which could only be perceived in moments of spiritual or religious ecstasy. The equation is between the Guru as an abstract principle of truth and enlightenment and God who is of the very essence of truth, enlightenment and bliss. But this idea was too abstruse for ordinary minds and there can be little doubt that it led to misconceptions, thereby lending colour to the charge that Sikhism was infected with man-worship.¹ It was soon forgotten that it is one thing to identify the 'Guru' with God and another to identify Guru Nanak or Guru Angad with Him and even in the writings of

very clearly elucidates the point we have been trying to make out. We quote below some of the more relevant of the verses :

gurudev mātā gurudev pitā gurudev suāmī param'esurā,
 gurudev sakhā agiān bhanjan gurudev bāndhab sahodarā,
 gurudev kartā sabh pāp hartā gurudev patit pavit karā,
 gurudev ādi jugādi jug jug gurudev sant Hari jap udharā,
 gurudev satguru pārbrahm param'esur gurudev Nānak Hari
 namaskarā.

It can be easily seen that some of these verses would become meaningless if the word 'guru' is not taken in an ultimate sense and it is possibly for that reason that Macauliffe renders the expression 'gurudev' by 'divine guru.' But 'gurudev' is clearly like pitṛdev or mātṛdev and is rendered more accurately by 'revered guru.' (For English version of the verses, see Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 168-69.)

¹ Sarkar's assertion that 'the pure monotheism of Nanak was afterwards infected by man-worship and that the later gurus came to be worshipped as superhuman beings whose acts cannot be judged by the standard of human reason' was followed by a very interesting discussion a short note on which is given in *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. III, p. 321.

Bhai Gurdas the distinction is obscure, if not entirely absent. Many are the occasions on which Bhai Gurdas refers to this notion of non-difference between God and the Guru¹ and on the whole, it cannot be denied that in his mind the divinity of the Gurus was both abstract and concrete. This was, indeed, a deplorable falling off from the high ideal of the Gurus because it indirectly lent support to the theory of incarnation which they had resolutely discountenanced. Guru Gobind Singh's unequivocal warning to his followers that all who would call him the Supreme Being shall fall into the pit of hell and that he was merely a servant of God, sent to this world to behold the wonders of creation,² leaves little room for doubt that this idea of non-difference between the Guru and God had been carried to illogical lengths, far beyond the implication of the Gurus themselves.

In Sikhism, therefore, the conception of the Guru was somewhat complex but we have not yet exhausted its contexts. The Guruship lends itself to further elucidation when it is studied in relation to the other great development in Sikhism, *viz.*, the ideal of the Sikh brotherhood. A man of supreme religious gifts and of wide toleration, Guru Nanak had asked his followers to regard all men as equal since everybody had the same shelter, *viz.*, that of God, and since God's light was contained in the hearts of all.³ And applied to life this idea readily translated itself into love of

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 17; VI, 19; VII, 19; IX, 1; XII, 5; XIII, 25; XVI, 18, XXIV, 21, 24.

² *Bacitra Nāṭak*, VI.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 332.

mankind and service to humanity. At the start the idea is rather obscure, more or less a corollary of the main implications of Nanak's teaching, indefinite and vague in its import. But in the hands of Guru Nanak's successors it gradually became more definite and practical, and developed into one of the most vital and eloquent principles of the Sikh faith. The wide catholicity of the original idea had, no doubt, to undergo limitations as the principle became more and more communal in its import but at the same time the gain to Sikhism was immense. The sense of solidarity among the Sikhs was considerably strengthened and they were made more fit to play the part that was in store for them in the future as they became accustomed to live their religion and not merely to profess it.

In the first place, it should be noted that the development of the Sikh ideal of brotherhood is intimately bound up with the history of the gradual consolidation of the Sikh *Panth*, which we traced in the previous chapter. Circumstances compelled a gradual but definite departure from the orthodox Hindu fold and the Sikhs were welded together into a new community, united by common ties of privilege and duty. It has been seen that in this work of gradual separation and consolidation the Gurus had to face considerable opposition and that particularly during the pontificate of Amar Das it had been a rather uphill task. Naturally there could not but be a corresponding reaction in the Sikh attitude and the intensity of that reaction is clearly discernible in some of the hymns of Guru Ram Das. Opposition begot opposition and the estrangement became wider and wider. In short, the Sikhs soon came

to regard themselves as a brotherhood of the elect, the specially favoured of God and all those who were outside the charmed circle were characterised as 'accursed of God and accursed of the whole world.' Thus, Guru Amar Das says that the Guru's was the best of all religious systems as true disregard of the world could only be obtained by his system.¹ 'Curses on the lives, curses on the habitations of those who worship strange gods,' and 'they who turn their faces from the true Guru shall find no house or home : they shall wander from door to door like divorced women of bad character and evil reputation.'² In a more intense strain Guru Ram Das says :

"They who leave the Guru, who is present with them, shall find no entrance into God's court.

Let any one go and meet those slanderers, and he will see their faces pale and spat upon.

They who are accursed of the Guru are accursed of the whole world, and shall ever be vagrants.

Whoever goeth to meet those cursed by the true Guru shall lose the remnant of his honour.

They who are cursed by the Guru become leprous ; whoever meeteth them shall catch the leprosy."³

The Guru further remarks that 'he who denieth the Guru is base'⁴ and 'him who slandereth the perfect

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 190.

² *Ibid*, pp. 217, 221.

³ *Ibid*, p. 305.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 302.

true Guru the Creator will punish.' ¹ And he winds up with the assurance that

"God Himself is the protector of the true Guru, and will save all who follow him.

Him who meaneth evil to the true Guru the Creator Himself will destroy.

This is the word of the true God's court: the slave Nanak uttereth this prophecy." ²

Sikhism, which was of divine origin, was thus also under divine protection and the Sikhs formed a special class by themselves, unique in their saintliness and their exceptional privileges. Indeed, it seems to us that one of the main purposes of the writings of Bhai Gurdas is to establish this position for Sikhism and its votaries. He loudly proclaims the superiority and the excellence of the system promulgated by the Gurus,³ who are now directly identified with the Supreme Being Himself, a divine sanction is openly claimed for Sikhism ⁴ and the difference between the *gurmukh* and the *manmukh* is repeatedly stressed.⁵ The

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 301.

² *Ibid*, p. 308.

It appears to us that the violence of these hymns of Ram Das and several others that we find in the *Gaurī kī Wār*, gives us the measure of the strenuous opposition that Guru Amar Das had to face.

³ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 45; V, 9; XVI, 13; XXVIII, 19; see also Macauliffe; *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 242.

⁴ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 23; XXIV, 2; Bhai Gurdas claims Nanak to be *kali tārān* and *jagat guru*.

⁵ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, V, 15-19; XXX, 2-5; XXXI, 11.

It is needless to say that *gurmukh* is he who surrenders himself to the Guru and follows his instructions and all others are *manmukh*. (See Bhai Kahn Singh's *Gurumat Prabhākar*, p. 359).

former is extolled in all possible ways, whereas the latter is compared to a slave, or a beast in a man's frame and consigned to perdition. The *gurmukh* is likened to a piece of bright silken cloth which can be dyed in any colour and is fit to be used by all on occasions of solemnity and the *manmukh* to a coarse, black blanket which refuses all hues. The point is emphasised in various ways so that in Bhai Gurdas's hands the Sikhs are resolved into a 'chosen few' under the special protection and beneficence of the Lord and incidentally a blow is given to the catholicity of the original idea of equality of all men.

But there is nothing unusual here and some such ideas can be traced in the literature of almost every school of religious thought. It was the simultaneous inculcation of certain other principles that made the position different in Sikhism. The Sikh had become a privileged person but that was not all. He had also become a philosopher's stone and was capable of communicating holiness to others. 'He had saved himself and his family, and he shall save twenty-one generations, yea, the whole world.'¹ Even he who met the Guru could confer salvation on others and, therefore, every one of the Guru's followers was something of a saint and was to be served and respected as such. Guru Ram Das said that he was 'a slave to the slaves of those disciples of the Guru who perform his work'² and we are told that when three Sikhs

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 292.

² *Gauri kī Wār*, Macauliffe, *ibid*, p. 307.

named Bishan Das, Manak Chand and Puru went to visit the Guru and begged him to give them instruction for their own salvation, and that of their families, Ram Das bade them serve the Sikhs and induce their relations to do likewise.¹ Bhai Gurdas says that every Sikh was a saint and 'where there are two Sikhs there is a company of saints, where there are five Sikhs there is God.' A Sikh, therefore, was to love and respect a fellow Sikh; 'he is to search out the Guru's Sikhs and haste to do them favour.'³ He is even asked to drink the water in which he has washed the other's feet.⁴ And the profit that was to be derived from such service is depicted in glowing terms. Not to speak of other things, even salvation could be obtained by such service.

It would thus appear that as, on the one hand, love of mankind was narrowed down to love of the followers of Nanak, on the other, service to the Guru was expanded into service to Sikhs in general, and the Sikh brotherhood was ushered into being. As we have indicated above, in Sikh view every member of the brotherhood was a person of special sanctity but the matter did not stop here. The individual Sikh was further exalted to a position almost equal to that of the Guru himself. Ram Das says:

" To those who obey the will of the Guru, I am ever
a sacrifice;

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 274.

² Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, XIII, 19.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. IV, p. 244.

⁴ *Ibid*; see also Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, I, 3.

I am ever a sacrifice to those who have served the Guru.”¹

And tradition affirms that the Gurus proved the sincerity of their profession by their willing deference to the wishes of their followers even in questions that concerned their own household alone. Thus, when Chandu Shah, the Emperor's financial minister, offered his daughter in marriage to Hargobind, the son of Guru Arjan, the Guru refused the alliance mainly, as he said, on the ground that his Delhi Sikhs were averse to the proposal though he was fully alive to the dangers of incurring the displeasure of a person of the position of Chandu Shah. The threats and entreaties of the financial minister were equally unavailing and Guru Arjan finally said: “It is the Guru's rule to comply with the wishes of his Sikhs. Their words are immutable. When they once reject, it is not proper again to accept.”² Thus we have arrived at a very interesting position. On the one hand, we have the unconditional surrender of the Sikh to the Guru; on the other, the almost equally unconditional deference of the Guru to the will of his disciples. But the climax was reached when the Sikh was identified with the Guru himself and when Guru Hargobind told his disciples, ‘Deem the Sikh who comes to you with the Guru's name on his lips as your Guru.’³

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 329.

² Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. III, p. 80. ‘The point of the Guru's deference to the wishes of his followers is also brought out in the following statement of Guru Ram Das: “The Guru lives within his Sikhs and is pleased with whatever they like” (*Gaurī-kī-Wār*).

³ Macauliffe, *ibid*, Vol. IV, p. 219.

We are thus brought to another aspect of the Guruship, *viz.*, a sort of mystical union between the Guru and the Sikh. Guru Ram Das says, 'the Guru is Sikh and the Sikh who practises the Guru's Word is at one with the Guru,'¹ and Bhai Gurdas asserts again and again that 'the Guru is the Sikh and the Sikh is the Guru,'² there is no difference between them. That this was no idle precept is clearly proved by the statement of Sujan Rai of Batala that 'the Sikhs have such a regard for their Guru that any stranger who may come to their house and take the name of Baba Nanak is received as a friend.'³ The point is brought out more clearly in a very interesting anecdote recorded in the *Dabistān*.⁴ Mohsin Fani begins by stating that 'whoever takes the name of Guru is received in the house of a Sikh.' A thief thus introduced himself into the house of a Sikh. When the man went out, the thief killed the wife and decamped with her jewels. But on his way he met the Sikh who forcibly brought him back. When they came home everything was discovered, but the Sikh made a present of the jewels to the thief and urged him to go away. He told his neighbours that his wife was ill, then that she was dead and finally burnt her. This illustration may not seem entirely apposite because the point of identity between the Guru and the Sikh is rather obscure. But it cannot be denied that the anecdote exemplifies to

¹ *Asā Chhant*.

² *Wār*, III, 11; IX, 8, 9; XIII, 1; XV, 16.

³ *Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh*, p. 70.

⁴ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 286.

some extent the dictum of Guru Hargobind that 'whichever of the Sikhs comes to your house under the name of the Guru, him you may take for yours.'¹

It will be seen that the most important point that emerges out of the foregoing discussion with regard to the nature of the Guruship in Sikhism is its impersonal character. It primarily stands for the principle of truth and enlightenment that made itself manifest through the persons of the successive Gurus. Looked at from this standpoint the doctrine of its indivisibility and continuity becomes easier to understand and the several equations, which we have tried to develop in some detail, also lose much of their obscure and mystical character when it is remembered that the identification is really between principle and principle and has little reference to their concrete embodiments. If we can comprehend this impersonal aspect of the Guruship aright, the doctrine of its identity with the *Name* and the *Word*, the main instruments for the propagation of truth, would cease to perplex us ; even the apotheosis of the Gurus would no longer strike us as a regrettable lapse into man-worship, and the theory of the identity of the Guru and the Sikh would also become clearer and easier to grasp. And finally some of the most fundamental of the reforms of Guru Gobind Singh, his abolition of the personal Guruship and his dictum that the Khalsa is the Guru, would be seen in their proper perspective and would no longer appear to be either accidental or cataclysmic.

And it has also been made clear that the Sikh brotherhood as well was already a reality and its most

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 285.

striking characteristic was that it tried to live up to its professions ; the ideals of surrender and service were not mere text-book maxims. The demand of Guru Amar Das that

“ As the elephant offereth his head to the goad, as the anvil offereth itself to the hammer,

So should the disciple put his soul and body before his Guru, and stand and wait on him ” ¹

may appear fantastic but enough has been said to show that the spirit of devotion among the Sikhs did not fall much short of this high and exacting ideal. And the extent to which a Sikh could go for a brother Sikh, or even for one who falsely attempted to pass off in that guise, is almost without parallel. We have seen that the Sikhs had been asked to lead a life of what Bhai Gurdas calls ‘ *māyā vich udās*,’ ² or renunciation in the midst of worldly occupations, and the several examples of almost complete self-sacrifice that we have been able to pick up so far leave little room for doubt that, at least in some instances, this too was not an empty precept.

Coming next to a more detailed and practical view of Sikhism we are at once reminded of the well-known Sikh formula ‘ *nām, dān, isnān*.’ In several of the contexts in which the expression is used by Bhai Gurdas it appears that the trio stands for the entire message delivered by Guru Nanak for the uplift of mankind ³ and Bhai Kahn Singh also is of opinion

¹ Macauliffe, Vol. II, p. 222.

² Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, XII, 18 ; see also XII, 6 ; III, 2 ; XV, 21.

³ *Ibid*, I, 14 ; V, 13 ; XI, 3 ; XII, 16.

that the formula gives in a nutshell the essentials of Sikhism.¹ It has already been pointed out that the word *nām* or *Name* can be variously interpreted but we cannot be far off the mark if we say that in this formula *nām* stands for devotion to God and His worship. *Dān* ordinarily means charity and we get here the idea of service, and from *isnān*, which means bathing, we can deduce the conception of purity. 'Nām, dān, isnān' would thus stand for devotion to God, service and purity and it cannot be denied that these are of the very essence of Sikhism. But attempts have been made to elaborate the formula in greater details. Bhai Kahn Singh says that *nām* implies the exhortation that one should always remain conscious of God and save himself from the wiles of worldliness by remembering His omniscience and omnipresence. And further that a Sikh should always follow unhesitatingly the orders of the Almighty that have come down to him through his Gurus. By *dān* a Sikh is asked to equip himself in such a way by education as well as physical culture that he may prove to be of assistance to the community and the country, and may never be under the necessity of asking for any aid, pecuniary or otherwise, from anybody else. And lastly, *isnān* stands, on the one hand, for the cleanliness of a man's body, clothes, house, etc., so that diseases might be kept off, and, on the other, for the purity of the intellect which enables one to understand the true path and its implications.² While with

¹ Bhai Kahn Singh, *Gurumat Sudhākar*, p. 157.

² *Ibid.*

most of this nobody need have any quarrel, certain remarks seem somewhat overdrawn and particularly in the matter of *dān* the interpretation is undoubtedly far-fetched.

However, by the time of Guru Arjan these ideas had become more or less closely associated with certain definite practices. Of worship the only recognised form was the practice of the *Name*¹ but, as the *Sabad* and the *Nām* had already been merged in the *Bānī*, this came more particularly to mean the singing of the hymns of the Gurus and meditation on them. The wider context was not entirely laid aside and the Sikhs were still asked 'to repeat God's name under the Guru's instruction and at every breath meditate on God,' but, at the same time, a detailed and a somewhat formal scheme of daily observances was already evolved. As Bhai Gurdas says, a Sikh was to rise from his bed during the last watch of the night and have his bath in the river or the tank. He would then repeat the *Name* as instructed by the Guru in silence and absolute concentration. His next duty would be to go to the *Sangat* and there recite and listen to the hymns of the Gurus with deep reverence. At sunset he was to recite the *Sodar* and at night after reciting the *Sohalā* he was to distribute sacred food. The Sikh was thus given a simple and well-ordered scheme for the practice of the *Name*. Moreover, he was asked to observe certain ceremonies and

¹ Mohsin Fani states that the Sikhs had neither idols nor temples of idols (*Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 246) and Sujan Rai says that the followers of Baba Nanak always recite his poems during their worship. (*Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh*, p. 70.)

cultivate certain disciplines. He was to be pleasing in his words and practise humility in his conduct. He was to sleep little, eat little and talk little and associate primarily with persons of his own way of thinking. And above all, he should be unceasing in his devotion and service to the Guru.¹

And with regard to *isnān* as well we can detect a similar development. Though the idea of purity in the abstract was never wholly lost, special sanctity was attached to bathing in particular places and *isnān* came more particularly to mean ablutions in holy tanks. It has already been seen how bathing in the waters of the *Batwālī* was declared to be a highly meritorious act and how pilgrims constantly visited the place from far and near.² But the well of Goindwal was soon eclipsed by 'the tank of nectar' and it was authoritatively declared that 'bathing in this tank is equal to bathing in the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage, to the bestowal of alms, and the performance of great purifications.'³ It was further said:

" By bathing in the tank of Ram Das
All the sins that man committeth shall be done away.
And he shall become pure by his ablutions,
The perfect Guru hath given us this boon."⁴

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Wār*, VI, 3; XII, 2; XI, 11; XI, 4.

² *Supra*, p. 170. The *Batwālī* has 84 steps and 'it is a general belief among the Sikhs that whoever bathes on these steps, one by one, on the same day, repeating the Japji with sincerity to the last step shall be saved from the 84 lacs of transmigratory forms and go direct to heaven.' (*Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 682.)

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 11.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 13.

Nay more, 'he who batheth in it shall save his family; his own soul too shall be saved.'¹ In the matter of 'the tank of nectar,' therefore, the ideas of bathing and purity were combined and *isnān* came to stand for something very definite.

Similarly, in course of time *dān*, too, no longer implied merely a general injunction to practise charity. The idea inherent in it is that of service and it has already been shown how it developed in Sikhism on intensely practical lines and was carried sometimes even to a questionable degree. Moreover, it appears to us that the exhortation implied in *dān* was primarily responsible for the custom of presenting offerings to the Guru and the maintenance of *Langars*, and later on became more particularly associated with what is known as *Dasvandh*.²

This brings us to the question of the Sikh organisation as it developed in the hands of Guru Nanak's successors. Teja Singh says, 'It is the glory of Sikh history that the Gurus had in mind the duties of a nation as much as the duties of an individual.' Though, as we have seen, it is difficult to conceive that the successors of Nanak were consciously engaged in evolving a nation, evidence is by no means lacking to show that they were anxious to develop a sense of social

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 12.

² It has already been seen that Guru Arjan was the first to appoint *masands* and systematise the collection of offerings from the faithful. But there is no indication as to the proportion of the Guru's share. In later works like the *Tankhā Nāmā* we come across the definite injunction of paying *dasvandh* or one-tenth of one's income. (See Bhai Kahn Singh's *Gurumat Sudhākar*, pp. 457. 466).

obligation in their followers. The Sikh was gradually made to realise that his concern was not merely his own individual salvation but that he was a member of a community as well and, as such, had a dual set of responsibilities and duties. The ideal of service, as we have seen, became intimately bound up with the conception of the Sikh brotherhood.

But it should be noted that the ideal of service was by no means a monopoly of Sikhism. Almost all the medieval teachers inculcate it insistently and we are told that Chaitanya even went to the extent of saying that 'service to a Vaishnava was superior to the service of God.'¹ Moreover, it is not difficult to see that the ideal of service might very well be merely individualistic in its implication without in any way involving a sense of corporate responsibility. A corporate sense could only arise if certain obligations could be made definite and universal and given the character of a corporate liability. This distinction is extremely important to grasp because it explains the speciality that arose in Sikhism. It shows why, inspite of the fact that the ideal of service and the inculcation of a spirit of brotherhood were equally significant features of almost all the schools of religious revival in contemporary India, it was in Sikhism alone that a sense of corporate unity gradually evolved. As we have seen,² in Sikhism, from its earliest days, one such corporate obligation was the maintenance of the *Langar*, the responsibility for which rested on the entire Sikh community. The position at first is, no doubt, vague but it was gradually clarified

¹ *Chaitanya Bhāgavat* (Atul Krishna Goswami's edition), p. 420.

² *Supra*, p. 158.

and with the inauguration of the reforms of Guru Arjan the obligation in question became precise and definite, though perhaps somewhat wider in its import. At the same time, certain instruments were created which ensured its proper discharge.

Of these instruments the two of pivotal importance were the *Sangat* and the *Masand*. In the case of each it is possible to trace a distinct line of development till at last the two converged in the reforms of Guru Arjan. The original idea with regard to the *Sangat* appears to have been that of *sat* or *sādh sangat*, i.e., association with the pious. The advantages of such association are described in glowing terms and in the *Sukhmanī* Guru Arjan devotes many verses to impress on his followers the fundamental fact that *sādh sangat* was the very basis of all true religious life.¹ Guru Nanak had defined *sat sangat* as 'that society where the name of one God alone is mentioned'² and, as Sikhism developed, *sat sangat* came to mean association with the *gurmukh*, or to speak plainly, the Sikhs. Hence arose the idea of the Sikh congregation which came to be known as the *Sangat*. In describing the advantages of *sādh sangat* Bhai Gurdas makes it clear that of all such associations the most fruitful was that with the Guru's Sikhs, who were the holiest of the holy.³ He compares *sat sangat* to a river and says that just as water from any source may ultimately lose itself in the sea by reaching a river, similarly by associating with

¹ Macanliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 218-21.

² *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 278.

³ Bhai Gurdas, *Kabīṭ*, 57.

the *Sangat* one might lose oneself in the Guru.¹ The *Sangat* was the image of the Lord, it was *Sāch Khand* itself, the very abode of piety.² It will thus be seen that as with 'nām, dān, isnān,' so with *sādh sangat* the original idea soon finds a concrete embodiment and *sādh sangat* comes particularly to mean participation in the Sikh congregation that daily met around the Guru, mostly for religious purposes and sometimes to discuss matters of common interest. The virtues of such participation are proclaimed in highly laudatory terms and it soon becomes one of the obligatory features of the Sikh discipline.

So long as Sikhism was in its infancy and the Guru could offer instruction to his followers in person the single *Sangat* sufficed. But Sikhism gradually grew in popularity, its votaries daily increased and soon a situation arose when it became necessary to provide the Sikhs with convenient local centres. As we have seen, it was to meet this contingency that Guru Amar Das introduced the *manji*-system.³ It can easily be surmised that these *manji* were the earliest Sikh *Sangats* and, in all probability, in each and every one of them a *Langar* was set up, for in later days we invariably find that the *Sangats* were 'not merely places of worship but also wayside refectories which gave food and shelter to indigent wayfarers.'⁴ Properly speaking, the *Langar* and the *Sangat* were not two distinct institutions but rather the two component parts of one

¹ Bhai Gurdas, *Kabit*, 63.

² *Ibid*, 124, 125, 126.

Sāch Khand is the Sikh paradise.

³ *Supra*, p. 168.

⁴ *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 687.

single institution which generally went by the name of the *Sangat*. And it is important to note that the obligation to maintain the Guru's *Langar* was thus extended in scope and meaning, though it seems almost certain that the maintenance of the local *Sangats* was made a charge on the local people.

Circumstances compelled a steady multiplication of these institutions and by the time of Guru Arjan and his successor not only was there a network of *Sangats* strewn broadcast throughout the Manjha tract but they had spread even far beyond the borders of the Punjab. Bhai Gurdas gives us a list of the more important *Sangats*¹ and it appears that *Sangats* had grown up even in such distant places as Kabul in the west and Dacca in the east. Further, "in an old manuscript copy of Guru Granth Sahib, written in 1675, is found the story of a Sikh's travels in the Deccan, called *Hakikat Rah Mukam*, from which we gather something about the Sikh *Sangats* and temples scattered over Southern India and Ceylon."² The discovery of a few letters and manuscripts at Dacca by Gurbaksh Singh has clearly established that by the year 1666 "prosperous *Sangats* flourished at Sylhet, Chittagong, Sondip and Lashkar, besides the one at Sutrapur or Sangattola quarter of Dacca," and that by the time of Guru Gobind Singh Dacca had earned the title of 'the home of Sikhism.'³ It may also be mentioned that "Sikh

¹ Among others Bhai Gurdas mentions *Sangats* at Dalla, Sultanpur, Lahore, Kabul, Kashmir, Thanesar, Delhi, Fatehpur, Agra, Dacca, etc. (Wār, XI, 14-31.)

² *The Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 3.

³ *Sikh Relics in Eastern Bengal*, Dacca Review, 1916, pp. 225, 228.

temples still exist at Rameshwar, Salur, Bhaker and Shivakji in Madras and Colombo in Ceylon. Old temples also exist at Burhanpur, Surat, Bombay, Amraoti, Nirmal (District Adilabad in the Nizam's dominions). Manuscript copies of the Granth Sahib are to be found at Burhanpur and Surat and another old copy with one Bolaji Tripathi at Lonovala (Poona).''¹ Gurbaksh Singh says that the Khattris were the 'Marwaris' of those days and while the Aroras went north to Kabul and Kandahar, Balkh, Bukhara and even Russia, the Khattris monopolised the markets of Eastern and Southern India. Khatri settlements naturally grew up throughout these wide tracts and as many of these Khattris had accepted the teachings of Nanak, Sikhism also spread together with them. But the point with which we are concerned is that, though some of these developments are, no doubt, subsequent to the days we have been discussing, they unmistakably show how the *Sangat* habit had become a vital part of Sikhism. Wherever a Sikh might be, he was brought under a *Sangat* and through it made to realise that a "Sikh is not only to look to his individual character but is also to shoulder his responsibilities as a part of the corporate body of the Panth."

But it is important to remember that these *Sangats* were not so many loose, incoherent units. The reforms of Guru Arjan had moulded them into a closely knit system. Enormous projects like excavation of tanks and erection of temples had considerably increased the corporate liability of the Sikhs and Guru Arjan made that liability precise so far as individual Sikhs were

¹ *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, pp. 687, 688.

concerned. Further, the *Sangats* were placed under authorised *Masands* 'whose duty was to preach religion and be responsible to the Guru for the Sikh organisations in his diocese.' The *Sangats* were primarily centres of instruction and propaganda and we learn from the *Dabistān* that the *Masands*, on their part, appointed deputies¹ and through these multitudes were converted to Sikhism. On the other hand, it seems clear that with the introduction of Guru Arjan's reforms 'the *manji*-system underwent a change and the bishops did not remain purely spiritual guides but became collectors of tithes as well.' The duty of the *Masand*, in this respect, was to collect the offerings from the Sikhs of his diocese and transmit them to the Guru. It was the general rule for the *Masand* not to depend in any way on these offerings for his own subsistence, 'the principle being not to pollute the body,'² and it was expected that he should earn his living by engaging himself in some sort of remunerative occupation. In the month of Baisakh the *Masands* assembled in the court of the Guru, apparently to render account of the offerings received and report on the affairs of their respective *Sangats* with such of the Sikhs as might wish to accompany them. And we are told that at the time of taking leave each and every one

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 271. It is said that these deputies were called *meorās*, a term borrowed from Akbar's system. We also sometimes here of '*sangatias*,' which probably means heads of *Sangats*. (See *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 683, f.n.)

² Offerings, as we have seen, were to be regarded as poison and dependence on them for subsistence was tantamount to polluting the body.

of them received a turban.¹ The *masand*-system was thus a far-flung and at the same time a closely centralised organisation. Many are the instances which show that at least during several decades the system worked smoothly and worked well, ensuring a steady flow of resources to the Guru's treasury,² and the strength of the organisation may be gauged from the fact that even when it had deteriorated to such an extent that Guru Gobind Singh was seriously thinking of its abolition, the distant *Sangats*, where the spirit of faction was still absent, were thoroughly loyal and 'Dacca actually took part in the work of reformation and uplift undertaken by Gobind by supplying first class war elephants, men and munitions.'³

It seems that the only rift in the lute was provided by the earlier of those shrines that are known as *Gurdwaras*. A *Gurdwara* means a temple built on a place visited by a Guru and by the time of Guru Arjan several of these had already come into existence. The *Dharamsala* of Guru Nanak at Kartarpur, the shrine at Khadur, the *Bawali* of Guru Amar Das at Goindwal,

¹ *Dabistān*. I take this opportunity of acknowledging the assistance that I received from my colleague Mautavi Muhammad Ishaque in comparing Troyer's translation with the Persian text of the *Dabistān*.

² We get many instances of this in the Sikh records. To take only one among many that are available, it appears that the Gurus received a substantial income from the *Sangat* at Kabul. The beautiful horses that afterwards became the cause of collision between Guru Hargobind and the Imperialists are said to have been presents from a *Masand* of Kabul. We are also told that Sujān, a *Masand* of Kabul, amassed for the Guru great wealth from tithes and offerings. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 38.)

³ *Dacca Review*, 1916, p. 227.

the *Har Mandar* or the now famous Golden Temple of Amritsar, and the tank of Tarn Taran excavated by Guru Arjan himself were growing up into important centres of Sikh pilgrimage. But in the case of some of these shrines the cohesiveness that characterised the *Sangats* appears to have been absent. During the earlier days of Sikhism, when the Guruship was not yet hereditary, we notice a very significant fact. Every one of the first three successors of Nanak, or rather those who had been nominated Gurus before the hereditary principle was established, left the place of his predecessor and sought out a new one for himself. Guru Angad left Kartarpur and removed to Khadur, Guru Amar Das left Khadur and established his seat at Goindwal, and Guru Ram Das, in his turn, left Goindwal and laid the nucleus of the city of Amritsar. These facts can only be explained on the supposition that each of these Gurus found the place of his predecessor extremely uncomfortable owing to the undisguised hostility of the latter's descendants. As we have seen, after the death of Angad his son Datu usurped the Guru's *gaddi* at Khadur and refused to recognise Amar Das.¹ Similarly, Amar Das's son Mohan always remained hostile to Ram Das. Though Mohri, the eldest son of Amar Das, recognised Ram Das as the legitimate Guru, the hostility of Mohan alone seems to have been sufficient to induce him to leave Goindwal. It does not seem improbable that the control of the *Bawali* was thereby left to Mohan, as the *Dharamsala* of Kartarpur had already been left to the *Udāsīs*.

¹ *Supra*, pp. 165, 166.

But these difficulties were by no means serious and the Guru's control over the entire Sikh organisation of the *Sangats* through his *Masands* ensured the solidarity of Sikhism. At the same time Guru Arjan is said to have 'changed his mode of living so as to suit the present condition of the society over which he presided.' Trumpp says, 'Guru Arjun was the first Sikh Guru who laid aside the garb of a Faqir and kept an establishment like a grandee.'¹ That this is not wholly an exaggeration is proved by the Sikh chronicles themselves. The Guru's *darbar* is said to have displayed so much splendour and magnificence that even the agents of the Emperor's financial minister were astonished at the regal state and retinue of the Guru.² 'The Emperor and kings bow before him. Wealth ever cometh to him,' so remarked Karmo, the wife of Prithia when she tried to instigate her husband against Guru Arjan.³ It is thus clear that apart from its spiritual aspects the Guruship was also becoming a symbol of material power. Moreover, it is significant to note that Mohsin Fani had heard from the followers of Nanak that the Guru 'was in former times the raja called Janak and united the dignity of a king to that of a saint.'⁴ This seems indirectly to indicate that the Sikhs had begun to regard their Guru not only as a spiritual but also as a temporal ruler. Indeed, Latif says that the establishment of the hereditary principle

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxii.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 72.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 28.

⁴ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 268.

of succession changed the character of the Guruship and 'materially contributed to the growth of Sikh power, for henceforward the Guru was looked upon by his disciples not only in the light of a spiritual guide but also as a worldly lord and a ruling sovereign.' ¹ And we learn from the Sikh chronicles that Guru Arjan's son and successor, Hargobind, openly avowed this position by wearing two swords, one signifying spiritual, and the other temporal power.²

Narang says that, in this manner, "A state, peaceful and unobtrusive, had been slowly evolved, and with the Guru at its head as *Sachcha Padshah*, the Sikhs 'had already become accustomed to a form of self-government within the empire.' Their power and prestige had increased, and they were fast becoming a factor in the political life of the province." ³ This position, however, does not seem to be fully accepted by modern Sikh opinion. Guru Nanak had said that 'only those like to rule over others, who are either stupid or uninstructed,' and it is claimed that the Gurus could thus have no intention of ruling over others. We are further told that "it is wrong to say that by the time of the Fifth or the Sixth Guru the ideal of Sikhism was lowered and the Guru came to be called *Sachcha Padshah*, his seat a *takht* or throne, and the assembly of his followers a *darbar* or court. It will appear from the writings of the early Gurus, and especially from those of the bards who began to write in the time of the Second Guru, that these

¹ Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 253.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 4.

³ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

terms were not later innovations, but had been used from the beginning. They are eastern euphemisms used in respect of all revered faqirs." The question as to whether the ideal of Sikhism was lowered or not is really beside the point and it may also readily be conceded that the use of expressions like *Sachcha Padshah*, *takht* or *darbar* does not by itself indicate the development of a political ideal. It may also be quite true that 'the ideal of simplicity was kept up even in the midst of circumstances of comfort' and the bards whose compositions are incorporated in the *Granth Sahib* might have been quite justified in praising this 'balance of character, called *Raj Yog*, maintained between asceticism and prosperity ;' ¹ in short, the Sikh might not as yet have been conscious of his political destiny and the motive force behind the movement might still have been purely religious, but looked at from the point of view of the established state the new community was already reaching a position when it could no longer be treated with indifference. The *masand*-system was gradually familiarising the Sikhs with a kind of self-government of their own, and the Guru at the centre with his unchallenged authority, his magnificent *darbar*, and his control over the entire organisation of the *Sangats*, was to them a symbol of unity and of something mystical, beyond all ordinary considerations. A community with such definite leadership, with such high ideals of discipline and self-sacrifice and institutions that gave practical meaning to those ideals could not but react

¹ *The Gurdicara Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, pp. 19, 20.

on the government of the day. To the Sikh all these developments might have seemed perfectly natural and to have been inspired by nothing but purely religious motives but, at the same time, their effects on others might be different. For instance, the Sikhs had been accustomed to call their Gurus *Sachcha Padshah* and to them its connotation was purely religious, but it was liable to assume a different meaning in other minds, as is proved by the fact that one of the charges against Guru Arjan when he was called to the presence of Jahangir was that he had called himself *Sachcha Padshah* or the true king. Thus a situation was arising in which a conflict between the forces of the state and those of Sikhism was becoming more or less inevitable. The state could not but regard the Sikh organisation as one of immense possibilities, which might at any time become a rallying point of disaffection, and for the Sikhs too, there could be no getting back, no reversion to a line of policy less liable to be misunderstood.

APPENDIX A

GURU NANAK AND THE CASTE-SYSTEM

From the brief discussion in Chapter IV it would appear that so far as Guru Nanak is concerned there is no satisfactory evidence to contend that he had attempted an abolition of the caste-system. But what does the history of Sikhism under his successors reveal ? As we have indicated above, there is a very strong body of opinion to the effect that Sikhism had no mercy for caste and its usages and various bits of evidence from the subsequent history of Sikhism have been requisitioned to prove the contention. But we want to make it clear at the very outset that such evidence as there is must be used with caution for they may cut both ways and, whatever might be their value regarding the subsequent developments in Sikhism, they may not be at all conclusive regarding the attitude of Guru Nanak. Examples would make the position clear.

When Forster visited the Punjab in 1783 he saw that 'the Sikhs formed matrimonial connections only in their respective tribes and that the only aliment used in common by them was the pursaud or sacred bread.'¹ It does not require any imagination to perceive that it might be entirely wrong to rely on this evidence and come to a decisive conclusion regarding the attitude of Guru Gobind Singh towards caste and its usages. On the contrary, it might only be an

¹ Forster, *Travels*, p. 256.

illustration of the fact that the caste and tribal predilections were so firmly rooted that they soon gained the better of the liberal principles of Sikhism. In fact we are told that 'in the east of the Punjab conversion has absolutely no effect upon the caste of the convert. The Musalman Rajput, Gujar or Jat is for all social, tribal, political and administrative purposes as much a Rajput, Gujar or Jat as his Hindu brother. The fact is that the people are bound by social and tribal custom far more than by any rules of religion.'¹ The point that we would like to emphasise is that Forster's evidence cannot be relied upon to determine the attitude of post-Khalsa Sikhism towards the caste system and that its real meaning can only be grasped when it is examined in relation to other relevant historical factors.

We would next take up an example of a contrary type, an example which has been made much of by modern Sikh writers. Mohsin Fani speaks of a man named Pertabmal who is said to have been a *Jnani* or a wise man. "When Pertabmal saw that his son wished to adopt the faith of the Musalmans, he asked him: 'Why dost thou wish to become a Musalman? If thou likest to eat everything, become a Guru of the Sikhs, and eat whatever thou desirest.'² This story has been regarded as a proof positive that Sikhism did not recognise any restriction of eating and drinking.³ Now, this Pertabmal appears

¹ Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*, p. 14.

² *Dabistān*, Vol. II, p. 286.

³ *Ham Hindu Nahin*, pp. 145, 146; Teja Singh, *Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism*, p. 21, f. n.

to have been a man of grim humour and apparently did not entertain a very high opinion about the Sikhs and Sikhism. Mohsin Fani says that there was a Sikh named Davārāh who, it seems, was a *masand* of Hargobind. Pertabmal became his disciple and declared himself as his adherent. "Davārāh washed his feet and the water thereof was drunk by all the present followers of the faith, which they did to everybody whom they have gained over to their religion. At last, a dispute arose between Pertabmal and Davārāh; the latter said to the other: 'But yesterday I washed thy feet (that is made thee my disciple), and to-day thou makest war upon me?' Pertabmal answered: 'Oh weak-minded man! the Jats always wash my feet as thou hast done: my own hand never touches my feet.' " We are further told: "It is an established custom among the followers of Nanak to present, when they pursue a desire, a few direms to the chief of their master, or to their master, and solicit his favour. Pertabmal offered some direms to Kabeli, who was a religious chief appointed by Hargobind; he said with his hands joined: 'I wish to convoke for prayer, according to their custom, all the followers of Nanak; let that be granted.' Kabeli before giving his agreement asked: 'Thou wishest perhaps to see Hargobind?' Pertabmal said: 'I wish something more precious.' Kabeli asked: 'What is this?' The answer was: 'I wish the arrival of all the buffoons, dancers and musicians from Peshawar to Kabul, that we may see their actions, arts and tricks.' " ¹ Such a man was

¹ *Dabistān*, Vol. II, pp. 112, 113.

Pertabmal and it seems that we need not take his remarks at their face value. It is, however, an admitted fact that Guru Hargobind permitted animal diet to his followers, most probably as a necessary and almost inevitable concession to the traditional habits of the Jats, who had been entering Sikhism in ever increasing numbers, and it is quite conceivable that the Sikhs had become comparatively free in matters of eating and drinking. But, as we have already seen, we learn from the *Dabistān* itself that this was not the practice during the earlier days of Sikhism.¹ Guru Hargobind had thus brought about a clear innovation which was possibly pressed in by circumstances, and the fact in question can thus in no way be accepted as evidence regarding the original intentions of Sikhism. It is important to bear in mind that as Sikhism progressed it was bound to react to its environment and develop new forms and tendencies, but these latter are almost always mixed up with unforeseen historical factors and should therefore be closely analysed before they are made to throw light on the original message of Sikhism.

The two essentials of caste are the prohibition against intermarriage and eating in common. As we have already seen, the *Langars* of the Gurus knew no caste distinctions² but this cannot be said to prove anything, this way or the other, as examples of relaxation of caste rules regarding sacred food distributed from a public sanctuary are to be found even among

¹ *Supra*, p. 80.

² *Supra*, pp. 159, 166.

the most orthodox of Hindus.¹ As far as we are aware, there is no other evidence as regards inter-dining during the earlier days of Sikhism. But far more vital to caste is the prohibition against inter-marriage and here, too, there is hardly any evidence to show that intermarriage was practised or even encouraged. On the contrary, we get little bits of information, here and there, which seem to show that the prohibition was still regarded as important. For instance, it is said that when Amar Das's wife selected Jetha as a very suitable match for their daughter Bhani, the first question that the Guru asked Jetha when he was called to him was : ' My dear boy, who art thou ? ' and when Jetha answered that he was a Sodhi Khatri Amar Das felt greatly relieved. Trumpp regards this story as ' very significant as to the observance of caste by the earlier Sikh Gurus,'² and it would have practically set the question at rest if we could be sure of its authenticity.

Examples, moreover, are available to show that in some instances the Sikhs placed caste even above their faith, or in other words, they did not hesitate to enter into matrimonial connection even with non-Sikhs if the caste considerations were favourable. One single incident, which has already been referred to, is, to our mind, conclusive. We have seen that Chandu Shah, the emperor's Dewan, sought the hands of Hargobind for his daughter but Arjan refused. After Arjan's execution Chandu again came forward

¹ Among others may be mentioned the case of the temple of Jagannath at Puri.

² Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxix.

with his proposal but Hargobind sternly turned him back. Now, the point to notice is that Arjan refuses the alliance on the ground that his Delhi Sikhs were against the proposal and Hargobind tells Chandu plainly that he could not have anything to do with his father's 'murderer.' Chandu is indignantly described as a 'haughty man' who had used 'injurious expressions regarding the Guru' but not for once the point is raised that he was a non-Sikh and therefore no matrimonial alliance was possible with him. The fact that both the families, the Guru's and Chandu's, were Khatri, was obviously considered sufficient. In fact, we know of several cases which show that marriage between Sikhs and non-Sikhs actually took place. We have seen that Bibi Amro, a daughter of Guru Angad had been married to a nephew of Amar Das and that the marriage had taken place long after Lahina had adopted Sikhism and some time before Amar Das's conversion.¹ The daughter-in-law of the redoubtable Chandu Shah himself is said to have been the daughter of a pious Sikh,² and we are told that the Sikh wife of Rai Jodh, the owner of the village of Kangar, visited Guru Hargobind and prayed him to make her husband a Sikh.³ But with the changes that Guru Hargobind introduced a new situation arose. The anecdotes about Pertabmal that we discussed above show that there were persons who did not approve of these changes, and that such persons were, by no means rare even among the Sikhs themselves

¹ *Supra*, p. 165.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 97.

³ *Ibid*, Vol. IV, p. 153.

is proved by Bhai Gurudas's remarks in his XXVith *Wār*.¹ The result was that the Sikhs were boycotted and found it difficult to marry, the implication clearly being that the boycott came from the other side and that the Sikhs had no scruples in the matter.²

All these facts have got to be dispassionately considered if we wish to arrive at a correct view regarding the attitude of Sikhism towards the caste-system. No useful purpose can be served by ignoring them altogether or summarily rejecting them as mere exceptions. The only explanation that can in any way be consistent with the view that Sikhism aimed from the very beginning at a destruction of the social system would be that in such a difficult and vital matter the Gurus had perforce to proceed in a very careful and cautious manner and that they therefore aimed at a gradual corrosion at successive stages, rather than a sudden overhauling of the old order. But the difficulty is that there is no evidence to support such an explanation. The only thing that can possibly be advanced in its favour is the gradual relaxation of caste rules in the *Langar*, which, as we have already pointed out, cannot by itself be regarded as conclusive. On the other hand, we know that in the matter of animal diet there had been a definite turning back. As we have seen, Mohsin Fani distinctly states that Guru Nanak had ordered abstention from flesh. This precept, however, appears to have been neglected under his successors and Guru Arjan renewed the prohibition.

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 76, 77.

² This is said to be proved by one of the manuscripts discovered by Gurbaksh Singh at Dacca. (*Dacca Review*, 1916, p. 378.)

So that it does not appear that even in this matter there was a progressive realisation of the alleged object in view. But apart from all this, it is important to remember that there is hardly any evidence to show that the Sikhs practised intermarriage or that Sikhism encouraged it. Indeed, it seems clear to us that Sikhism in the beginning did not seek the abolition of the caste-system and that the changes that we come across at a later stage were due to historical factors which had nothing to do with the original enunciations of Sikhism. At any rate, it can be safely asserted that nothing in the history of his immediate successors can be made to show that Guru Nanak had intended the destruction of the caste system.¹

The point may possibly be raised that when we find that even Muhammadans were converted to Sikhism it is futile to argue that they still adhered to caste restrictions. In the Sikh records we come across several such instances. "Sewa Das in his Janam Sakhi mentions many places like the Kiri of Pathans, where a large number of Mohammedans became Sikhs. From the list of Sikhs given by Bhai Gurdas in his eleventh Var we find among others such names as Mardana, the rebeck-player, who accompanied Guru Nanak in his journeys, Daulat Khan Pathan who became a Sikh Saint, Gujjar a blacksmith who was a Sikh of Guru

¹ It seems to us that the following statement of Barth expresses the essence of the position : "Nanak even did not break in an absolute way with caste, which he tolerated as a civil institution, and of which the sect, inspite of attempts afterwards made in the direction of its complete abolition, has always preserved some traces." (*The Religions of India*, p. 243.)

Angad and preached Sikhism in his village, Hamza and Mian Jamal the happy, who remained constantly in the presence of Guru Hargobind.”¹ It is further said that ‘from history we gather many names of Mohammedans who became admirers of Sikhism.’ Some of these claims may very well be dubious and we have reasons to be sceptical when we are told that Daulat Khan Lodi had become a Sikh or that ‘Dara Shukoh was persecuted by his brother Aurangzib for being a convert to Sikhism,’ but at the same time it cannot be denied that many Muhammadans had come under the influence of Sikhism. This is clearly established by Jahangir’s own remark in his *Tuzuk* that many foolish Muslims had been fascinated by Guru Arjan’s ways and teachings.² But it should not be ignored that there is a fundamental difference in the position of these Muslims in post-Khalsa Sikhism and that in its earlier days. In later history we come across instances where Muslim converts were fully absorbed within the community by being allowed to marry in genuine Sikh families and there are cases where such Muslims served as even *Mahants* of *Gurdwaras*,³ but such was by no means the position at the time we have been discussing. The conclusion we arrived at can only be shaken if it can be shown that these Muslims who had come under the influence of Sikhism were fully assimilated within the community

1 *The Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 21.

2 *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Rogers and Beveridge, Vol. I, p. 72.

3 *The Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, pp. 31, 32. It may not, however, be improbable that most of these were cases of reconversion.

by being allowed free intermarriage with other sections of the Sikhs or allowed to interdine with Sikhs in general even outside the *Langar*. Unless such evidence is forthcoming the position remains that these Muslims formed a class apart within the community, if they had at all become Sikhs in the truest sense.

APPENDIX B

HINDU DIVINITES IN THE JAPJĪ

In Chapter IV we had occasion to refer to two passages from the *Japjī* which seem to throw some light on Guru Nanak's attitude regarding the divine personifications of Hinduism. The first passage in the original runs thus :

ekā māi jugati viāi tini chele parvāṇu
iku sansārī iku bhandārī iku lā'e divāṇu
jiv tisu bhāvai tivai chalāvai jiv hovai phurmāṇu

Teja Singh translates :

“ It is generally supposed that the Divine Mother by a mysterious scheme conceived and gave birth to three deities :

One that creates, the second that supports, and the third that adjudges destruction.

But in reality it is God, who directs the world according to His will, and no other.” (*The Japjī*, p. 45.)

It will be seen that the expressions ‘ it is generally supposed,’ ‘ but in reality,’ and ‘and no other’ have nothing in the original to support them. Such additions are, no doubt, often necessary but they are hardly permissible when the text readily yields itself to a satisfactory interpretation without them. In fact, the verses appear clear enough and there can be little doubt that Macauliffe's translation is truer to the text.

The second passage is as follows :

suṇiai isaru baramā indu ;
 suṇiai mukhi sālāhaṇ mandu,
 suṇiai jog jugati tani bhed ;
 suṇiai sāsāt simriti ved.

The two renderings are :

1 “ By hearing the Name man becometh as Shiv, Brahma and Indra.

By hearing the Name even the low become highly lauded.

By hearing the Name the way of Jog and the secrets of the body are obtained.

By hearing the Name man understandeth the real nature of the Shastras, the Smritis and the Veds.”

(Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 200.)

2 “ Next this instruction will make the disciple realise the true significance of the powers represented by Siva, Brahma and Indra;

And he will begin to dislike the offering of praise to them.

He will come to know the secrets of physical nature and the unifying spirit working behind ;

And in the light of that knowledge he will be able to correct his views about the Shastras, Smritis and Veds.”

(Teja Singh, *The Japjī*, pp. 27, 28.)

It seems clear that Teja Singh's is not a translation but rather an interpretation according to his own lights and that, too, is hardly acceptable. We do not see how his second line can at all come in. It is, no doubt,

the most difficult in the original and Macauliffe suggests the following rendering as an alternative—‘By hearing the Name one is praised by high and low.’ ‘Sālāhaṇ mandu’ may possibly be made to yield something like what Teja Singh writes but then the word ‘mukhi’ is left out of account. Further, we are at a loss to understand how ‘jog jugati tani bhed’ can mean ‘the secrets of physical nature and the unifying spirit working behind.’ The sentence seems clear enough and further it is to be noted that ‘tani bhed’ or ‘tanu bhed’ appears to be a technical *yogic* expression like ‘ṣaṭ chakra bhed.’ Again, we have to prefer the translation of Macauliffe to that of Teja Singh.

In justice to Teja Singh it should, however, be pointed out that his difficulties arise from the fact that in his view Guru Nanak had preached an uncompromising monotheism and consequently he felt it necessary to provide an explanation for the passages in question consistently with that fundamental postulate; and it can, on no account, be denied that Sikhism had enjoined the worship of the One True Lord alone. At the same time verses of the above type and several other considerations would seem to indicate that Nanak’s attitude towards the divinities was not one of total denunciation. He merely pointed out their limited and secondary character but his emphasis on the unity of the Godhead was so pronounced and insistent that these could have no chance of survival in Sikhism. And those who are even superficially acquainted with the philosophical basis of Hinduism will not possibly deny that the position there is not fundamentally different.

Most of the difficulties about interpreting the message of Guru Nanak arise from the fundamental assumptions that he had brought something entirely novel and that all the later developments in Sikhism were implicit in his teachings. It can easily be seen that to insist on the latter contention is to take a view of history which can hardly be historical and as regards the former it can be shown that of the various features of Sikhism, taken separately, there are not many which we do not come across in the past history of Hinduism. What Guru Nanak did was that he selected certain aspects and put an almost exclusive emphasis on them, with the result that the whole, as it emerged, appeared, more or less, new. It can also be shown that in this matter of selection and emphasis he follows, in most of the characteristic details, the line previously adopted by the *Bhāgavatas* and that in its metaphysical aspects Sikhism preached the Vedānta of the Vaisnavite brand.¹ We have no space here to illustrate the details but there can be no room for doubt that no interpretation of Guru Nanak's message is likely to be adequate without a critical consideration of this positive background.

¹ It is interesting to note that an *Udāsī* named Amar Das wrote the commentary called *Maṇiprabhā* on the *Sikhāmaṇi*, which again is a commentary on the *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*. The *Udāsī* apparently regards Guru Nanak as an exponent of the Vedānta. (See *Maṇiprabhā*, p. 1, Nirṇaya Sāgar Edition. For this reference I am indebted to my late lamented friend and colleague Dr. Prabhatchandra Chakravarti.)

APPENDIX C

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Gurumukhi

Ādi Granth or the Granth Sāhib.

It may be called the Bible of the Sikhs and is admittedly the greatest authority on Sikhism. Its main interest, no doubt, is religious but, as we have seen, references to historical incidents are also found here and there, and having regard to the paucity of records on the history of the Gurus, these must certainly be regarded as invaluable. Besides, the work can also be of very great interest to students of literature and philology.

The story of its compilation has already been discussed and we would here only add a word or two about its arrangement. As is well known, the work begins with the Sikh invocation to God and the place of honour is given to the *Japjī*. Then follow in succession the *Sodar*, the *Sopurakh* and the *Sohilā*. The rest of the work is, in the first place, arranged under *Rāgs* and these again are sub-divided into *Mahalās*, *Mahalā I* being assigned to the hymns of Guru Nanak, *Mahalā II* to those of Guru Angad and so on. It will thus be seen that in the *Granth Sāhib* we are given a long list of notes and measures then current in India and this together with the other list that we get in the *Āin-i-Akbari* (Gladwin's Translation, pp. 728-30)

cannot but be of considerable value to persons interested in the history of Indian music.

The original compilation of Guru Arjan consisted of the hymns of the first five Gurus and those of several *bhagats* and bards. The *bhagats*, whose hymns are incorporated in the work, are as follows : Jaidev, Namdev, Trilochan, Paramanand, Dhanna, Sadhna, Ramanand, Beni, Pipa, Sain, Kabir, Ravi Das, Farid and Bhikan. Of these the last two were Muhammadans. Narang says Bhikan is of unknown caste but Macauliffe is definite that he was a Muhammadan. (See Narang, *op. cit.*, Appendix I, p. 1 ; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 1.) Narang gives a list of the bards and states on the authority of the *Panth Prakās* that they were all Brahmans (*ibid*, p. ii). Although we do not know anything definite about the sources from which Guru Arjan procured the hymns of the *bhagats*, it can easily be seen that their occurrence in a work of which the date is definitely known is of considerable importance. For instance, Guru Arjan's collection of the hymns of Kabir is older than most of the other anthologies that have come down to us and might very well be a more authentic record. In fact, there can be absolutely no doubt that the *Granth Sāhib* is a work of momentous importance and our regret is that it has not attracted the attention of more competent scholars and indexed on critical and scientific lines. What a great aid that might be to Indian scholarship is not difficult to understand.

Janamsākhi, by Sewa Das.

See *supra*, pp. 53, 56, 57.

Wārs and *Kabits*, by Bhai Gurdas.

As we have seen, Bhai Gurdas was the learned amanuensis of Guru Arjan and wrote the *Granth Sāhib* to the latter's dictation. He was the first cousin of the mother of Guru Arjan and came into prominence even during the pontificate of Guru Ram Das, who is said to have sent him to Agra to preach the Sikh religion there. His importance in the Sikh community is also proved by the fact that when Guru Arjan required an emissary to go to Mohan and persuade him to hand over to the Guru the old collection of the hymns of the first three Gurus Bhai Gurdas was selected for the purpose. He lived till 1629, half through the pontificate of Guru Hargobind, and died in full glory and prestige.

Bhai Gurdas must have written a substantial portion of his works before the compilation of the *Granth Sāhib* in 1604 but it is also evident that sections were added later on during the pontificate of Guru Hargobind. The interest of Bhai Gurdas's works is, no doubt, predominantly religious and the *Kabits* in particular contain merely 'the Sikh tenets and a panegyric of the Gurus' but it is important to note that they mark a definite landmark in the evolution of Sikhism and should thus be regarded as extremely valuable.

Bacitra Nāṭak.

The work was written by Guru Gobind Singh himself and was later on incorporated in the compilation known as *Dasam Pādshāh Kā Granth*. The work is one of supreme importance and is undoubtedly the greatest authority regarding the Guru's mission and

his earlier relations with the Hill chieftains. It also incidentally throws some light on the history of the Guru's predecessors.

Gyān Ratnāwalī, by Bhai Mani Singh.

See *supra*, p. 57.

Nānak Prakās, by Bhai Santokh Singh.

See *supra*, pp. 57-61.

Sūraj Prakās or *Gur Partāp Sūraj*, by Bhai Santokh Singh.

This book, although written so late as 1843, is the main source from which we get the details of the pontificates of Guru Nanak's successors. It is a big, ponderous work consisting of several volumes and was recently republished with annotations from Amritsar. Macauliffe's opinion about the work is highly unfavourable. He says that Bhai Santokh Singh was a man with strong Hindu tendencies. He possessed a fervid imagination "which was largely stimulated by copious draughts of bhang and other intoxicants in which he freely indulged" and which led him to invent many stories discreditable to the Gurus. "Some of his inventions are due to his exaggerated ideas of prowess and force in a bad as well as a good cause, a reflex of the spirit of the marauding age in which he lived." It is extremely doubtful whether Bhai Santokh Singh had any reliable authority before him and "his statements accordingly cannot often be accepted as even an approach to history."

It is an extremely interesting fact that in spite of these strictures Macauliffe has been compelled to make the *Sūraj Prakās* the primary basis of his "Lives" of the Gurus, particularly of the earlier Gurus. In fact,

he had no other alternative and so long as more reliable records are not forthcoming this work will remain, more or less, indispensable, though, no doubt, it should be used with great caution and restraint.

Prachīn Panth Prakās, by Rattan Singh.

The account of the Gurus is extremely brief though it is of considerable importance regarding later affairs.

Sri Guru Panth Prakās, by Bhai Gyan Singh Gyani (1880 A.D.).

The author has made a laudable attempt in this work to clear the history of the Sikhs from some of the exaggerations and absurdities of Bhai Santokh Singh. The history of the Gurus is fairly detailed but it appears that the author himself sometimes introduces details which have hardly any basis in fact. It should be used with caution.

Ham Hindu Nahin, by Bhai Kahn Singh.

A very interesting book but not of much historical value.

Gurumat Prabhākar, by Bhai Kahn Singh.

The work is practically an index to the *Granth Sāhib* and is thus extremely useful. It can rightly be regarded as a source book of early Sikh history.

Gurumat Sudhākar, by Bhai Kahn Singh.

A collection of extracts from the writings of Guru Gobind Singh and various other Sikh authors. An interesting book and serves as a guide to further reading.

Several other works exist in Gurumukhi, e.g., the *Itihās Guru Khālsā* or the *Tavārikh Guru Khālsā* but these are rarely of any practical assistance.

Guru Shabad Ratnākar Mahān Kosh, by Bhai Kahn

This is an Encyclopedia of Sikh literature and a work of the highest importance.

II. Persian

Tuzuk-i-Jāhāngiri. English translation by Rogers and Beveridge.

In this work there is only one significant passage in which Jahangir explains the reasons which led him to order Guru Arjan's execution. For the period covered in the present volume it is of no material assistance.

Dābistan-i-Mazahab, by Mohsin Fani. English translation by Troyer and Shea.

The author who wrote under the pseudonym of Mohsin Fani was a contemporary of the 5th, 6th and 7th Gurus and appears to have been a personal friend of the 6th Guru Hargobind. Cunningham characterises the author as 'a garrulous and somewhat credulous Mahomedan' and the light-hearted manner in which anecdotes of various kinds are woven into the body of the narrative no doubt gives some countenance to this view of the great historian of the Sikhs. But when all is said, the fact remains that scrappy though it is, it helps us considerably to distinguish the earlier from the later tradition and must thus be regarded as invaluable.

Khulāsat-i-Tawārikh, by Sujān Rai of Batala (1695).

The references to Sikh history are few and far between but nevertheless they are important.

Siyar-ul-Mutāqherin, by Ghulam Hussain Khan,
(about 1780 A.D.).

Of no practical value for the period covered in this volume.

III. Urdu

Tārikh Makhzan-i-Punjab, by Mufti Ghulam Sarwar Qureshi (1887).

Not of much practical use.

Tārikh-i-Punjab, by Kanhayya Lal (1881).

It gives a history of the Punjab from the rise of the Sikhs to the Mutiny together with an account of the State of Jammu. The account of the Gurus is full of legendary myths and is of very little historical value.

IV. English

India Tracts, by Browne (1788).

Browne resided at Dēhli as the East India Company's representative to the Court of Shah Alum. He there met two learned Hindus of Lahore who had in their possession some Hindi accounts of the Sikh Gurus. On the basis of these accounts a Persian manuscript was prepared which Browne translated into English and published as his 'Tract.' The value of the work, so far as early Sikh history is concerned, would become apparent if we quote the author as our authority for stating that Guru Arjan was succeeded by Ram Rai and that in 1662 a son, named Tegh Bahadur, was born to Harkrishan.

A Journey from Bengal to England, by Forster (1798).

Forster travelled through the Punjab during the years 1783 and 1784 and incorporated in his 'Travels' a short sketch about the Sikhs. Though he claims that he noticed only such parts of the story 'as are either founded on received tradition or on those legends which have the least exceptionable claims to credit,' his account of the earlier phases of Sikhism is of little practical value.

Sketch of the Sikhs by Malcolm (1812).

The work was first published in the *Asiatic Researches*. When he was with the British Army in the Punjab in 1805 Malcolm succeeded in securing a copy of the *Adi Granth* and several historical tracts in Gurumukhi. His friend Dr. Leyden supplied him with translations of several other tracts and these formed the basis of Malcolm's work. The records that Malcolm used are thus older than the *Sūraj Prakāś* and this gives a peculiar value to his work. But unfortunately Malcolm's book appears to have been written carelessly and does not help us much.

History of the Sikhs, by Macgregor (1846).

Macgregor's was the first attempt to write a connected history of the Sikhs. The work is now hopelessly out of date.

History of the Sikhs (Wm. H. Allen & Co., London, 1846).

This work was compiled from the papers of the late Captain Murray. The earlier chapters were written by the Editor himself. But these chapters appear to have been based on Malcolm and are thus not of much use.

History of the Sikhs, by Cunningham (1849).

Still the standard work on Sikh history but the earlier chapters are now in many places out of date and require revision.

Adi Granth, by Trumpp (1877).

Trumpp prepared his work under the auspices of the India Office and took seven years to elaborate the volume. Macauliffe is of opinion that Trumpp's translation was "highly inaccurate and unidiomatic, and furthermore gave mortal offence to the Sikhs by the *odium theologicum* introduced into it. Whenever he saw an opportunity of defaming the Gurus, the sacred book, and the religion of the Sikhs, he eagerly availed himself of it" (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Preface, p. vii). It cannot be said that these remarks are unjustified but, at the same time, it should be noted that Trumpp's Introductory Essays, particularly his translation of the old *Janamsākhī*, are still useful, though, no doubt, they should be handled with caution.

History of the Punjab ; by Syed Muhammad Latif.

The chapter on the Sikh Gurus is hopelessly inadequate and often marred by an anti-Sikh bias.

The Sikh Religion, its Gurus, Sacred Writings and their Authors, by Macauliffe (1909).

This is a monumental work and marks an epoch in the history of Sikh studies.

In the Preface to his great work Macauliffe wrote "one of the main objects of the present work is its endeavour to make some reparation to the Sikhs for the insults which Trumpp offered to their Gurus and

their religion." This reparation has been rendered in full but I feel bound to say that in doing this Macauliffe has not been always fair to Hinduism and the Hindus. I say this with great regret because my indebtedness to Macauliffe's great work cannot be adequately expressed.

There is one other matter which I think necessary to mention. Macauliffe makes it clear in the Preface that his intention has been, "in fulfilment of his promise to the Sikhs, to write this work from an orthodox Sikh point of view, without any criticism or expression of opinion of his own." The result has been that his accounts of the Gurus have suffered greatly in consequence. There has been no attempt to discriminate between fact and fiction, contemporary and infinitely more reliable evidence has been mixed up with later myths and, on the whole, the accounts have emerged, more or less, as a jumble in which legendary matter predominates. It seems to me a matter of great regret that Macauliffe chose the method that he did because nobody was more competent than he to attempt a critical account of the Gurus after a careful discrimination between the old and later traditions.

Transformation, of Sikhism by G. C. Narang (1912).

Interesting in its own way but superficial.

History of Aurangzib, Vol. III, by Sir J. N. Sarkar.

The account of the Sikh Gurus is not very well-informed and often unnecessarily offensive to Sikh sentiment.

History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion, by Khazan Singh.

Full of details but absolutely uncritical.

A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province, compiled by H. A. Rose.

A mine of information on all sorts of topics. Sections on the Sikhs and Sikhism are interesting and useful.

The Japji, by Teja Singh.

An English translation of the Japjī with a very ingenious Introduction.

Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism, by Teja Singh.

A very interesting account of the growth of the Sikh community under the ten Gurus but the main thesis of the book is hardly acceptable.

Asa di Var by Teja Singh.

An English translation of the *Asā di Vār*. The introduction is important and traces in some detail the growth of the Sikh organisation.

The Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening.

The Introduction is very interesting and gives some new details about the earlier phases of the history of Sikhism.

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ERRATA

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
6	11	were	was
21	17	are	is
63	26	amost	almost
91	29	actully	actually
118, fn. 2:	<i>add</i>	Malcolm is apparently making a confusion regarding his authority.	
121	20	essenital	essential
145	12	grarually	gradually
168	18, fn. 1. 5	<i>manjis</i>	<i>manji</i>
184, fn. 1:	<i>read</i>	Macauliffe, <i>op. cit.</i> , Vol. II, p. 153 <i>for</i> the paragraph given therein and <i>transfer</i> the latter to page 183 and <i>read</i> it in relation to 'to whom he gave whatever he received from his parents' (ll. 15, 16).	
201	14	suckle	suck
216	2	systematictrial	systematic trial
260, fn. 1	3	here	hear
268	25	Guru of the Sikhs	Sikh of the Gurus
273	1	Gurudas •	Gurdas.

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EVOLUTION OF THE KHALSA

VOL. II

THE REFORMATION

BY

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PREFACE

The first volume of this work was published in 1936 and I owe an apology to my readers for having taken so much time over the second volume. But the delay has been due to circumstances over which I had no control and even now, when the volume is at last seeing the light of day, I have not been able to bring it out in a form in which I would have liked it to appear. I am particularly sorry that owing to Press difficulties it has not been possible to provide diacritical marks in the body of the work, though, I hope, that the Glossary given in Appendix E would largely make up the deficiency.

I would take this opportunity of acknowledging my heavy indebtedness to my friend and colleague, Dr. A. C. Banerjee, but for whose ungrudging assistance it would have been impossible for me to get the book through the Press under the present trying circumstances. I would also express my thanks to Mr. A. Mukherjee of Messrs. A. Mukherjee & Co., who has been uniformly helpful.

INDUBHUSAN BANERJEE.

Calcutta, the 20th June, 1947.

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EVOLUTION OF THE KHALSA

CHAPTER I

GURU HARGOBIND AND THE BEGINNING OF ARMED RESISTANCE

I. The Execution of Guru Arjan

It has been said that as a result of the reforms and more specially the organisational work carried out by Guru Arjan and his predecessors "a State, peaceful and unobtrusive, had been slowly evolved"¹ and that the Sikh community had come to acquire the position of an *imperium in imperio*, that of a separate polity within the Mughal Empire. The question may very well be raised as to whether the reforms carried out by Guru Arjan and his predecessors could directly be ascribed to political motive but whatever the original intention might have been it cannot be denied that these reforms considerably prepared the way for the political development that the Sikhs achieved under Guru Arjan's successors. By the year 1604 the Sikhs had become a more or less compact community, in command of an efficient and extensive organisation reaching to the corners of the province and even beyond. The well-knit organisation of the *Sangats* and the *Masands* not only kept the Sikhs together and in touch with their leader, but also provided them with funds necessary for common purposes and familiarised them with a kind of self-government, however imperfect it might have been. The separation from the *Udasis* and the barring of the door to asceticism had made Sikhism essentially a religion of householders, a religion which aimed at harmonising valid worldly pursuits with a true religious life. The spectacle of a religious teacher at the head of such an extensive organisation and with a body of followers who had been taught that to sacrifice their all for the Guru was the

¹ Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism* (Second Edition), p. 76.

highest and the most meritorious act, and whose sense of brotherhood and love for each other transcended all other feelings, could not but disturb the equanimity of the established State and clearly a crisis was coming when a direct conflict would be difficult to avoid.

This crisis was precipitated by what has been called the sole mistake of Guru Arjan's life. Somehow or other, Guru Arjan became implicated in the rebellion of Prince Khusrau and was sentenced to death by the orders of the Emperor Jahangir. The exact nature of the Guru's participation in the Prince's rebellion remains somewhat doubtful but it is clear that it was neither very deep nor very extensive. Jahangir writes : "At last when Khusrau passed along this road this insignificant fellow (Arjan) proposed to wait upon him. Khusrau happened to halt at the place where he was, and he came out and did homage to him. He behaved to Khusrau in certain special ways, and made on his forehead a finger-mark in saffron, which the Indians (*Hindus*) call qashqa and is considered propitious."¹ On the other hand, Mohsin Fani says that the Guru merely offered prayers for Khusrau,² while Macauliffe states that moved by compassion the Guru gave the Prince five thousand rupees for the expenses of his proposed flight to Kabul.³ Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that the Guru had irretrievably compromised himself, and however trivial his so-called participation in the Prince's rebellion might be, the offence could be and was regarded as a very serious one.

The Sikh writers, however, set the matter in a somewhat different light. Some of these are altogether silent about Guru Arjan's complicity in Khusrau's rebellion and attribute the Guru's execution solely to the machinations of Chandu Shah, who had become an implacable enemy of the Guru ever since the latter had refused the matrimonial alliance between Chandu's daughter and his son and thereby "disgraced Chandu in the eyes of the

¹ Rogers and Beveridge, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 72.

² Troyer and Shea, *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 272.

³ Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, p. 85.

people.”¹ We are told that even before this final incident Chandu had tried several times to poison the ears of the Emperor against the Guru but the broad-minded Akbar was shrewd enough to see through the designs, particularly as he entertained a very high opinion of the Guru’s character and saintliness. But the death of Akbar and the succession of Jahangir opened to Chandu the desired opportunity and at last he triumphed.² Other accounts admit the Guru’s help to Khusrau but make it appear in a far less prominent light than the plots of Chandu Shah. It is also said that the hands of Chandu were strengthened by the intrigues of Prithia,³ the eldest brother of Guru Arjan and a bitter enemy of the Guru since his supersession by the latter, as also by the hostility of the Kazis and the Brahmans. There was a regular conspiracy against the Guru and we are told that, besides participation in Khusrau’s rebellion, the charges against the Guru also included the allegations that he called himself “True King”, that he had established a large organisation with the intention of making war upon the Emperor, and that he had compiled a book which blasphemed both the Hindus and the Mussalmans.⁴

Thus it appears that according to Sikh tradition the Guru’s so-called participation in the rebellion of Prince Khusrau was, no doubt, the ostensible pretext for his execution but the real reasons were different. The organisational strength of Sikhism, the Guru’s position as the leader of a fairly compact community and the facts that he was called *Sachcha Padshah* by his followers, and that he had compiled a book which did not spare the current perversions of both Hinduism and Islam, were all used to create a prejudice against the Guru and an attempt seems also to have

¹ The public disgrace of Chandu, referred to in the *Sikḥhan de Raj di Bikhia*, arose, as Narang informs us (*op. cit.*, p. 80, f.n. 1), out of a mistaken notion of honour that a noble Khatri could not brook to marry his daughter to any one else, after a bridegroom for her had been once selected.

² *Sikḥhan de Raj di Bikhia*, p. 22. Forster’s *Travels*, Vol. I, p. 258.

³ Prithia, however, died shortly before Guru Arjan’s execution. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 89).

⁴ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, pp. 81, 82, 87-90.

been made to incite religious bigotry. Curiously enough this view of the matter receives substantial confirmation from what the Emperor himself says in his *Tuzuk*. Jahangir writes: "In Gobindwal, which is on the river Biyah (Beas), there was a Hindu named Arjun, in the garments of sainthood and sanctity, so much so that he had captured many of the simple-hearted of the Hindus, and even of the ignorant and foolish followers of Islam, by his ways and manners, and they had loudly sounded the drum of his holiness. They called him Guru, and from all sides stupid people crowded to worship and manifest complete faith in him. For three or four generations (of spiritual successors) they had kept this shop warm. Many times it occurred to me to put a stop to this vain affair or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam."¹ It is thus clear that even before Guru Arjan had compromised himself by his so-called complicity in the rebellion of Prince Khusrau, Jahangir had been thinking of either forcibly bringing him within the fold of Islam or else to put an end to him and his Sikhism. We are at a loss to understand why in the face of this clear and indisputable evidence Sarkar says that "Guru Arjan merely suffered the customary punishment of a political offender,"² because, whatever the ostensible pretext might have been, there can be little doubt that Guru Arjan was primarily a victim of religious bigotry. Macauliffe says: "Thus did Guru Arjan for his sanctity, his conversion of the Hindus and Muhammadans, his compilation of the Granth Sahib and his assistance to the grandson of his former benefactor, fall a victim to the bigotry and inhumanity of a Muhammadan emperor."³ Regard being had to what the Emperor himself writes in his *Tuzuk* we do not think that any reasonable exception can be taken to this view of the matter.

The Emperor writes: "When this (news about Guru Arjan and Khusrau) came to my ears and I clearly understood his folly, I ordered them to produce him and handed over his

¹ Rogers and Beveridge, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 72.

² J. N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. III, p. 308.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 100.

houses, dwelling-places, and children to Murtaza Khan, and having confiscated his property commanded that he should be put to death.”¹ On the other hand, Mohsin Fani says: “The Padshah Nur-ed-din Jahangir called to his court Arjun-mal on account of his having offered prayers for the king’s son Khusro, who had rebelled against his father. Khusro having been taken, the king ordered the imprisonment of Arjun-mal, and wanted to extort a large sum of money from him. The Guru was helpless; they kept him a prisoner in the sandy country of Lahore, until he died of the heat of the sun and of ill-treatment.”² And again Sikh tradition affirms that when brought before the Emperor, the Guru was asked as to why he had helped Khusrau. The Guru’s reply was that his assistance to the Prince had nothing to do with his opposition to the Emperor. He found Khusrau in a forlorn condition and gave him some money to enable him to continue his journey, as it would have been the height of heartlessness and ingratitude on his part if he had failed to show some kindness to the grandson of his former benefactor, the Emperor Akbar. Such a reply naturally failed to satisfy Jahangir, who ordered that the Guru would have to pay a fine of two lacs of rupees and also to erase the hymns in his Granth which were opposed to the Hindu and Mussalman religions.³ These conditions the Guru refused to comply with and thereupon he was tortured in various ways and ultimately put to death. It will thus be seen that what happened is not wholly clear. The Emperor does not say anything about the huge fine which, both Mohsin Fani and the Sikh chroniclers assert, he wanted to extort from Guru Arjan and the forcible realisation of which appears to have been the purpose with which inhuman tortures were inflicted on the Guru. The Sikh writers say that the celebrated saint Mian Mir interceded on behalf of the Guru⁴ and it may well be that the sentence of death was commuted to one of a large fine. But the Guru either could not or would not pay the

¹ Rogers and Beveridge, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 72, 73.

² *Dabistan*, Vol. I, pp. 72, 73.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 91

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

amount. Mohsin Fani says that when this large fine was imposed the Guru was helpless, while Sikh tradition affirms that when the Guru's followers made an attempt to collect the amount he stopped them. "Whatever money I have is for the poor, the friendless and the stranger,"¹ said he. Either way, Guru Arjan was compelled to submit to infinite tortures which, in the end, led to his death.

Mohsin Fani says that the Guru died of the heat of the sun and of ill-treatment. This incident occurred in the height of the summer (the Guru having died in June, 1606) and it seems that the terrible Lahore heat came as a handy instrument in the hands of Guru Arjan's torturers. We are told that the Emperor's agents "poured burning sand on the Guru, seated him in red-hot cauldrons and bathed him in boiling water."² Sarkar says that there was nothing exceptional here and that "these were the usual punishments of revenue defaulters of those days."³ But it appears to us that to call Guru Arjan a revenue defaulter because of his inability or refusal to pay the fine and then justify the tortures inflicted on him on grounds of current usage, ignoring all the other circumstances connected with his death, show a perversity of judgment, which can hardly be excused in a historian.

Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that the Sikhs looked upon the matter in a totally different light and, naturally enough, they ascribed the death of their beloved Guru, who was renowned for the saintliness of his character and to whom people had flocked from all quarters for spiritual solace and enlightenment,⁴

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

A vivid description of the horrible tortures to which the Guru was compelled to submit is given in the *Panth Prakash*, p. 97. The Sikh accounts, however, draw a veil of uncertainty over the last moments of the Guru and "piously assert that, having obtained leave to bathe in the river Ravi, he vanished in the shallow stream, to the fear and wonder of those guarding him." (Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, Garrett's edition, p. 53).

³ J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

⁴ It is said that even the famous Muhammadan saint Mian Mir came on a visit to the Guru. (Rose, *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, p. 683).

to the bigotry and cruelty of the Muhammadan Government. The development of the Sikh community had hitherto proceeded without any interference from the State, which had, on the contrary, helped it in various ways. But now it became evident that the circumstances had changed and that it would no longer be possible to preserve the community without the aid of arms. This is why Trumpp says that "Guru Arjan's death is the great turning-point in the development of the Sikh community, as from that time the struggle commenced that changed the entire character of the reformatory religious movement."¹ In self-defence the Sikhs took to arms and the state also could not ignore this new development, particularly as the organisational strength of Sikhism and its unified leadership made it a magnet which might at any time become a rallying point of disaffection. A struggle was thus becoming, more or less, inevitable and it openly broke out under Guru Arjan's son and successor, Guru Hargobind.

II. The Imprisonment of Guru Hargobind

Mohsin Fani says that Guru Arjan was followed by his brother Baratha, but his son Hargobind also made pretensions to the Khalifat (deputyship) and obtained the place of his father.² Baratha is evidently a corruption of Prithia, the name of the eldest brother of Guru Arjan, and this is clearly proved by Mohsin Fani's identification of the followers of Baratha with the Mainas, *i.e.*, the *Minas*. Ever since his supersession Prithia had been the most unrelenting enemy of Guru Arjan and it is not improbable that he would raise difficulties after his brother's death. But the Sikh accounts state that Prithia had died just at the critical moment when his intrigues against Guru Arjan were about to bear fruit. It may be that Prithia's son Mihrban raised some difficulties about the succession but Hargobind apparently proved too strong for him.

Guru Arjan's last message to his son and successor, Hargobind, is said to have been as follows: "Let him sit fully

¹ Trumpp, *Adi Granth*, p. lxxxii.

² *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 273.

armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability." We are told that although the new Guru was at the time a mere boy of eleven, he proceeded forthwith to carry out the injunction of his father. As we have seen, the Emperor, according to the *Tuzuk*, had handed over the dwelling-houses as well as the family of Guru Arjan to Murtaza Khan, but it appears that no restriction was placed on the activities of the new Guru and he was allowed to go, more or less, his own way. The Sikh writers say that one of the first acts of Guru Hargobind was to gather the nucleus of an army around himself. In the very beginning of his pontificate he is reported to have told Bhai Budha: "My endeavour shall be to fulfil thy prophecy. My seli shall be a sword-belt, and I shall wear my turban with a royal aigrette."¹ Several warriors came to him for service and very soon a considerable number of Manjha youths enlisted in his cause. The Guru soon acquired a body of troops about 500 strong and a proclamation was issued to the *Masands* to the effect that the Guru would be pleased with those who brought him offerings of arms and horses instead of money. "Several men out of employ and without a taste for manual labour flocked to the Guru's standard," and others also gathered around him "who were satisfied with two meals a day and a new uniform every half-year."² This sudden change in policy was opposed by the Guru's mother as well as by Bhai Budha, but the Guru silenced them both by saying that it was in fulfilment of Bhai Budha's own prophecy that he was wearing two swords, signifying temporal and spiritual powers. "In the Guru's house religion and worldly enjoyment shall be combined,"³ said he. There was necessarily a change in the Guru's habits and we are told that he systematically turned his attention to chase and other warlike occupations. Animal diet was permitted and even encouraged and "his disciples soon imitated their Guru in these robust practices."

But the Guru was not allowed to continue long in this manner. He was soon called by the Emperor to Delhi and then

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

imprisoned in the fort of Gwalior. The reasons for Guru Hargobind's incarceration, as also the way he was released, are not quite clear and the Sikh chronicles have shrouded the incident with a cobweb of myths beneath which it is not easy to penetrate. The story that the Sikhs relate is somewhat as follows: Chandu Shah again came forward with the proposal of marrying his daughter to Guru Hargobind. In his letter to the Guru Chandu said that he had now forgotten the former enmity and would be glad to have Hargobind as his son-in-law but, at the same time, he did not fail to threaten the Guru that if he did not agree to the proposal he would serve him as he had served his father. The Guru returned the only answer that he could and sternly refused to have anything to do with one whom he regarded as his father's murderer. Chandu was enraged beyond measure and at once began his machinations. He represented to the Emperor that the present Guru had vowed to take revenge on account of his father's execution and that there was danger of an insurrection from his proceedings. It was necessary that he should be closely watched or, better still, summoned to Delhi to be personally admonished by the Emperor. Thereupon Guru Hargobind was called to Delhi. He remained there for some time and had several interviews with the Emperor, but in spite of his best efforts, as well as those of his friends, Jahangir's suspicions could not be allayed. About this time the Emperor had a very severe illness at Agra and sought the advice of an astrologer to consider what would be the most auspicious time for him to sit on his throne after his recovery. Chandu bribed the astrologer who informed the Emperor that a severe calamity was hanging upon him and that he could escape it only if some holy man could be sent to the fort of Gwalior to do penance there. Again, at the instigation of Chandu the Emperor's advisers agreed that Hargobind was just the holy man required and as a result the Guru was sent to the fort of Gwalior.¹

It can be easily seen that the above account presents more of fable than of history and there can be no doubt that the more

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 8—20. The story is also given with slight variations in Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxiii, *Suraj Prakash* and *Gur Bilas*.

probable reasons for the Guru's imprisonment are given in the *Dabistan*. Mohsin Fani says: "He (Hargobind) had many difficulties to contend with. One of them was, that he adopted the style of a soldier, wore a sword contrary to the custom of his father, maintained a retinue, and began to follow the chase. The Emperor in order to extort from him the balance of the fine which had been imposed on Arjan Mal, sent him to Gwalior."¹ There is nothing improbable in this and, as we have seen, the Sikh records unanimously state that from the very beginning of his pontificate the Guru had, in a manner, deserted the path of his predecessors and taken to the policy of armed defence. The feeble and insignificant military preparation of a boy still in his teens might be considered negligible but its possibilities could not be denied and the Emperor's object appears to have been to extort, if possible, the fine that had been imposed on Guru Arjan and had not been paid, and to secure the orderliness of the Sikhs in general by keeping their Guru as a hostage. At the same time, what the Sikh records say about the intrigues of the enemies of the Guru and his family should not be entirely ignored. As Beni Prasad suggests,² the Emperor's own remarks in the *Tuzuk* make it, more or less, clear that even in the more serious matter of Guru Arjan's execution he had been goaded into action by others and it is not at all improbable that these very same men now procured Guru Hargobind's imprisonment. On his way to Kabul and back Jahangir had twice halted at Lahore for some days in 1607 and the beginning of 1608, and it may well be that it was on these occasions that Hargobind's enemies procured the Emperor's audience and made their representations against the young Guru.

Mohsin Fani states that Guru Hargobind had to remain a prisoner in the fort of Gwalior, on scanty rations,³ for a period

¹ We have given Macauliffe's rendering of the passage in question. Troyer's translation is obviously wrong and has led to a good deal of misunderstanding.

² Beni Prasad, *Jahangir*, p. 150, foot-note.

³ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 274. The Sikh accounts also seem to admit this indirectly. "The Guru took hardly any food—his rations he distributed among the needy prisoners."—(Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 23).

of twelve years. We have stated elsewhere¹ the reasons for our view that the period of imprisonment must have been much shorter and we have explained why we think that the Guru was probably released near about 1611. Be that as it may, the way as to how the Guru was released is also not very clear. The Sikh writers, most of whom vaguely confine the Guru's imprisonment to a period of only 40 days, state that a pious Sikh named Bhai Jetha "succeeded in soothing the Emperor, who had been troubled with fearful visions" and that as a reward for this, and also as the result of the pleading of Wazir Khan, a Mughal noble, on behalf of the Guru, Jahangir at last called Hargobind to his presence.² Mohsin Fani says that during the period of the Guru's confinement in Gwalior many Sikhs used to come there and bow before the walls of the fort and at last moved by pity the Emperor ordered the Guru's release.³ And again, it has also been said that the famous saint Mian Mir, after whom the Lahore cantonment is named, and who was a friend of the Guru's family, interceded on his behalf and secured his release.⁴ But whatever the real reason for the Guru's release might have been, it is clear that henceforward there was a complete change in the attitude of the Emperor towards the Guru and his Sikhs. Sikh tradition goes so far as to say that when the Emperor ordered the Guru's release, the captive Rajas who had been in the fort of Gwalior and who had forgotten the pangs of prison in the company of the saintly Guru, bewailed the impending separation so much so that the Guru was at last constrained to inform the Emperor that he did not like to get his freedom, unless the captive Rajas also were set at liberty together with him. Jahangir at first refused but on the the Guru's standing security for the Rajas, the request was granted. It was for this reason that Guru Hargobind was given the title of '*Bandi Chhor Baba*.'⁵

¹ See Appendix A.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 24-26. Forster says that an officer named Mahobut Khan interceded on behalf of the Guru. (*op. cit.*, p. 259).

³ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 274.

⁴ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁵ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 26, 27. It may not be improbable that the fact that later in life Guru Hargobind gave asylum to some fugitive

But apart from these legends, it seems that the tables were now completely turned on the Guru's enemies and he had now the desired opportunity of wreaking his vengeance on Chandu Shah, the most implacable among them. We are told that the Emperor was now fully convinced of Chandu's perfidy and handed him over to Guru Hargobind to deal with him as he liked. The Sikh records describe in detail the indignities that were heaped on Chandu and the severe castigation he was made to undergo. "On a signal from the Guru, Bhai Bidhi Chand and Bhai Jetha seized Chandu, took off his turban, tied his hands behind his back, and showered blows of slippers on his devoted head. While being thus castigated he was led through the streets of the city, a warning to all men. He was pelted with stones, mud, and filth, and several people spat on his face. The Sikhs made him over to pariahs as if he were a dog. Dirt and filth continued to be poured on him, and he was reduced to a condition in which no one could recognise him."¹ Whatever that might be, the death of Chandu closes a definite epoch in the Guru's life and we enter upon the second phase of his career, when we find him in the role of a friendly collaborator of Jahangir and his Government.

III. Guru Hargobind and the Mughal Government : the Period of Friendly Co-operation

Mohsin Fani says: "Hargobind was always attached to the stirrup of the victorious Jahangir" and "after Jahangir's death Hargobind entered the service of his majesty Shah Jahan, the victorious King."² Thus it would appear that since his release from Gwalior till at least the beginning of the reign of Shah Jahan, Guru Hargobind was attached, in some capacity or other, to the Mughal Government. But what exactly his position was it is difficult to say. The more important Sikh records are silent

chiefs and nobles might have had something to do with the origin of the legend.

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 30.

² *Dabistan*, Vol. II, pp. 273, 274.

about this acceptance of service by Guru Hargobind but two of the later works say that the Guru was appointed a sort of supervisor over the Punjab officials with a command of 700 horse, 1,000 foot, and 7 guns.¹ This, on the face of it, seems absurd and is positively disproved by the almost decisive negative evidence of the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. In that diary "full accounts of the riots and rebellions, wars and conquests are given. The imperial regulations are reproduced in full. All the important appointments, promotions and dismissals are mentioned. Sketches of the principal nobles and officers are drawn in a life-like manner" and "the Emperor's own life is revealed with candour and frankness."² The fact that even the name of Hargobind does not occur in Jahangir's memoirs seems to prove that the Guru could not have been so intimate with the Emperor as the Sikh writers would have us believe, and the position that he held was also certainly a very minor one, which the Emperor did not think worth his while to notice. Mohsin Fani's evidence also points definitely to the same conclusion, for he says that for some time the Guru "attached himself to Yar Khan, the eunuch, who held the office of a Faujdar in the Nawabi of the Punjab, and whom he assisted in the administration."³ Guru Hargobind's position in the administration was thus definitely a very minor one and for some period at least he had been the mere assistant of a Faujdar.

Yet, on the whole, the relation in which the Guru stood to the Mughal Government since his release from Gwalior till the beginning of the reign of Shah Jahan when open hostilities broke out, is, more or less, obscure and it is not easy to place the facts in an intelligible order or to understand the motives that inspired the Guru. He lived on the whole in peace with the Government and, as we have seen, he also held a minor position in the administration but besides what Mohsin Fani says about his being associated with the Faujdar Yar Khan for some time we know

¹ *Panth Prakash*, p. 107. *Itihas Guru Khalsa*, p. 128.

² Beni Prasad, *Jahangir*, p. 454.

³ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 274.

practically nothing else about this aspect of his career. The Sikh writers, no doubt, state that the Guru had become a great friend of the Emperor and had accompanied the latter once to Kashmir,¹ and also that he had been given a command against Raja Tarachand of Nalgarh, whom he subdued and brought before the Emperor.² But these statements find no independent corroboration, and, considering the loose and irresponsible manner in which details are often woven into their narratives by Sikh chroniclers, it is difficult to accept these statements at their face value. But even if true, these do not improve our position to any appreciable extent and the question of Guru Hangobind's relation to the Government of Jahangir remains, partly at least, in the realm of conjecture.

Though they may or may not have a bearing on the question in hand, several facts, however, come out, more or less, clearly. The Guru's imprisonment does not seem to have damped his military ardour in any way and there is evidence to show that he continued the same old policy which he had adopted towards the beginning of his pontificate. He was anxious to have, by his side, an army, however small, which he might use for defensive purposes in times of emergency and we are told that the old force was soon revived. Mohsin Fani says: "The Guru had 800 horses in his stable, 300 troopers on horseback

¹ In the accounts followed by Macauliffe it is only stated that the Emperor had requested the Guru to accompany him to Kashmir but it does not appear that the Guru complied with the request. The Guru, no doubt, visited Kashmir later on, but that was due to the devotion and attraction of Bhayabhari, the mother of Sewa Das, a Brahman, whom the Guru had converted to Sikhism. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 31, 60, 61).

² *Panth Prakash*, p. 107. *Itihas Guru Khalsa*, p. 128. Macauliffe, however, says nothing about this incident. Narang mentions the *Dabistan* as an authority for this statement. Mohsin Fani, however, merely says in another connection that the Guru took refuge at Geraipur (Kiratpur) "which lies in the mountainous district of the Punjab, and was then dependent on the Raja Tarachand, who had never paid homage to the Badshah, Shah Jahan." (*Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 276). Narang's confusion is perhaps due to the fact that both the chiefs are named Tarachand, but Kiratpur was situated within the territories of the hill chief of Kahlur and so the two Rajas could not be identical.

and 60 men with fire-arms were always in his service."¹ This force, as Cunningham suggests,² possibly served as the Guru's body-guard and secured the safety of his person. Besides, the Guru is said to have enlisted many malcontents and fugitives among his followers and to have taken many dacoits and free-booters into service. This seems to be confirmed by Mohsin Fani's statement that "whoever was a fugitive from his home took refuge with him."³ Guru Hargobind also enlisted bands of Pathan mercenaries, and a Pathan chief named Painsa Khan became one of his most able and trusted adherents.⁴ In fact, Guru Horgobind's open struggle with the Mughal authorities during the early years of the reign of Shah Jahan clearly shows that he had at his back some solid military strength, however insignificant it might have been when compared with the mighty resources of the Mughal Empire.

In the second place, we find that during the period in question the Guru often lived away from Amritsar and the Sikh records often speak of the anxiety and concern that the Guru's people there felt for him. Indeed, there is evidence to show that the Guru had been leading, more or less, a wandering life and this, together with his other innovations, led to a good deal of misunderstanding. Apparently the Sikhs of the old school did not like the Guru's innovations and thought that "he was too much occupied with Mahomedans and military exercises." The Guru often used to distribute the offerings made to him by the Sikhs to his Muhammadan followers. Painsa Khan in particular was pampered in every way. This the Sikhs could not appreciate and it was ultimately decided that a deputation consisting of some notable Sikhs should wait upon Bhai Gurdas, who had very great influence with the Guru, and ask him to remonstrate with Hargobind on his general conduct. It is said that it was on this occasion that Bhai Gurdas composed the significant *pauri* that

¹ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 277.

² Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

³ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 277.

⁴ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 52, 76.

occurs in his 26th *Var*. The story of the deputation may or may not be true and the *pauri* itself might have led to its invention, particularly as such instances are not rare in Sikh literature,¹ but the evidence of the verses themselves is incontestable. There is clear internal evidence which proves that the *pauri* was composed after the release of the Guru from Gwalior, and as Bhai Gurdas died in 1629, it is evident that it was written during the particular period of Guru Hargobind's life which we have been now discussing. The importance of the *pauri* in question cannot be gainsaid, as Bhai Gurdas was a contemporary and a very ardent admirer of the Gurus, and we make no apology for quoting it in full. It runs:

“People say the former Gurus used to sit in the temple ; the present Guru remaineth not in any one place.

The former Emperors used to visit the former Gurus ; the present Guru was sent into the fortress by the Emperor.

In former times the Guru's darbar could not contain the sect ; the present Guru leadeth a roving life and feareth nobody.

The former Gurus, sitting on their thrones, used to console the Sikhs ; the present Guru keepeth dogs and hunteth.

The former Gurus used to compose hymns, listen to them, and sing them ; the present Guru composeth not hymns, nor listeneth to them, nor singeth them.

He keepeth not his Sikh followers with him, but taketh enemies of his faith and wicked persons as his guides and familiars.

I say, the truth within him cannot possibly be concealed ; the true Sikhs, like the humble-bees, are enamoured of his lotus feet.

He supporteth a burden intolerable to others and asserteth not himself.”²

It is to be noticed that in the last two verses Bhai Gurdas does not dispute the apparent truth of the people's allegations, but merely expresses his firm belief that the Guru's motive will soon become clear and then everybody will learn to appreciate

¹ See Vol. I of this work, pp. 56, 57.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 76, 77.

his actions. That the Guru's innovations had been causing misgivings and that his actions were not always appreciated by his contemporaries are also shown by two anecdotes about Pertabmal narrated by Mohsin Fani.¹ There can thus be little doubt that Sikhism was undergoing a transformation in the hands of Guru Hargobind and that it was causing apprehensions all around.

Trumpp says: "As the Guru's expeditions were nearly always directed against the Mahomedans and the extortionate provincial authorities, we need not wonder that his popularity fast increased with the ill-treated Hindu rural population; every fugitive or oppressed man took refuge in his camp, where he was sure to be welcomed without being much troubled about religion, and the charms of a vagrant life and the hope of booty attracted numbers of warlike Jats, who willingly acknowledged him as their Guru, the more so as he allowed his followers to eat all kinds of flesh, that of the cow excepted."² It has already been seen that Guru Hargobind admitted even robbers and free-booters into his service and that fugitives and malcontents gathered round his standard. And considering the traditional warlike and marauding instincts of the Jats, who by this time already formed the backbone of the Sikh community, it may perhaps also be true that the hope of booty and of adventure had attracted a good many of them far more than any higher religious motive. But we do not know on what grounds Trumpp says that the Guru led expeditions against the Muhammadans and the extortionate provincial authorities and that this made him highly popular among the rural Hindu population. As will appear later, the Guru's military actions were mostly of a defensive nature and, in almost all cases, he did not lead expeditions, rather expeditions were led against him. He had sense enough to perceive that in a conflict with the Mughals he could have no chance, but, at the same time, he was no longer content to remain at the absolute mercy of the Government, helpless to resist when resistance was the only alternative to disgrace and ruin. This

¹ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, pp. 112, 113. These anecdotes may be found also in Volume I of this work, p. 269.

² Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxiv.

it is important to remember, for otherwise we are likely to misunderstand completely the Guru's policy and career.

Indeed, the only expedition, besides that against the Raja of Nalgarh already referred to, which, according to the Sikh records, took place during the period we have been discussing, was that to Nanakmata, a very tame affair after all, and hardly to be counted among the military exploits of Guru Hargobind. We are told that an *Udasi* named Almast complained to Guru Hargobind that "he had been expelled from his shrine by the *Jogis*, who had also burnt the *pipal* tree under which Guru Nanak had held debate with the followers of Gorakh Nath." The Guru had no difficulty in rescuing the shrine and putting Almast in possession of it. The Guru remained there for some time and "busied himself with the organisation of a methodical Sikh service under the guidance of Almast." Since then "the place has borne the undisturbed name of Nanakmata, and remained in the possession of *Udasi* Sikhs."¹

Trivial though this incident may appear in the history of the adventures of Guru Hargobind, it is important in another way. There is evidence to show that near about this time Sikh activities were spreading outside the Punjab and sometimes even to far-off places and the Sikh organisation also had perforce to be widened. Under Guru Hargobind and his successors the system of *Sangats* and *Masands* was supplemented by several *Dhuans* (hearths) and *Bakshishes*² (bounties) and in these institutions the *Udasis* were often made to play a prominent part. It is important to remember that the *Udasis* always lived

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 50—54. It is said that "this or another Almast had been deputed by this, the sixth Guru, to Shujatpur near Dacca and had there founded a *sangat*. This *sangat* at Shujatpur was called after Natha Sahib, third in succession to this Almast." It is significant that "the inscription on a stone of the well of this *sangat* commemorates the name of the original founder and his 'Mother Lodge' of Nanakmata. This new *sangat* was not named Nanakmata, but it was under the Lodge at Nanakmata in Naini Tal, and its priests were appointed or removed by the head at that place." (Gurbux Singh, "*Sikh Relics in Eastern Bengal*", *Dacca Review*, 1916, p. 228). This throws a clear light on the extension of Sikh organisational work about this time.

² Teja Singh, *Sikhism, Its Ideals and Institutions*, pp. 72, 73.

in friendly co-operation with the Sikhs and, besides celibacy and asceticism, their tenets were, in all fundamentals, the same as those of Sikhism. Further, we are told that Baba Sri Chand, the eldest son of Guru Nanak and the founder of the *Udasi* order, adopted, prior to his death in 1629, Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind, and "in token of adoption and succession to him, put on Gurditta's head a Persian hat, and on his neck a string of lotus seeds."¹ The orders thus came closer together and the *Udasis*, who had no families to look after and were therefore more at liberty to undertake responsibilities in difficult and out of the way places, were unreservedly utilised by Guru Hargobind and his successors in spreading the message of Sikhism and broadening its organisation.

Be that as it may, it appears that the Guru succeeded in living at peace with the Government and, more or less, in friendly co-operation with it till the end of the reign of Jahangir. But the Guru's position was an extremely difficult one, and now and then incidents happened which well-nigh embroiled him in a quarrel with the authorities. One such was the incident of Kaulan, the daughter of the Kazi of Lahore, or as some say, his concubine.² The Guru and the Kazi were already on bad terms when the incident further embittered the position. We are told that a beautiful horse that was being brought from Kabul by a Sikh *masand* named Sujan was forcibly captured by an imperial officer, who duly presented it to the Emperor. Jahangir, in his turn, presented the horse to the Kazi of Lahore but the Guru forcibly recovered it and in addition, Kaulan left the Kazi's house and took asylum under the Guru at Amritsar. The Sikh

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 130.

² The Sikhs unanimously state that she was the daughter of the Kazi, whereas the *Tarikh-i-Punjab* states that she was merely a maid-servant. There may be something in what Narang says about the girl: "Muhammadans, according to Cunningham, assert that she was a concubine, and the Hindu name of the girl, Kaulan (lotus), would confirm the Moslem view. The girl might have been a Hindu and might have been forcibly abducted by the Kazi, by no means an uncommon occurrence in those days. Thinking the Guru to be a champion of the Hindus, she might have escaped and taken refuge with him." (Narang, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 108, foot-note.)

chroniclers state that this Kaulan was the daughter of the Kazi of Lahore. From her very childhood she had been of a religious disposition and had become a disciple of the saint Mian Mir. Her father did not like all this and when even on attaining puberty the girl refused to marry, the Kazi lost all patience and began to illtreat her. Thereupon Kaulan took counsel with Mian Mir, who advised her to seek the protection of the Guru and the result was that Kaulan stealthily left her father's place and took refuge with Guru Hargobind at Amritsar. The Kazi was highly incensed and represented the matter to the Emperor as an abduction and also reiterated his other grievance against the Guru on the score of the horse. But Jahangir refused to interfere and there the matter apparently ended.¹ The Emperor's decision might have been, to a great extent, influenced by the fact that Mian Mir was somehow involved in this affair, for Jahangir entertained the very highest respect for that saint. Off and on the Sikh records state that Mian Mir had been a very great friend of the Guru's family and it may not be improbable that the influence of his name considerably helped Guru Hargobind in maintaining his friendly relations with the Mughal Government during the reign of Jahangir.

IV. Guru Hargobind and the Mughal Government : the Period of Open Hostilities

With the death of Jahangir we enter upon a new epoch in the career of Guru Hargobind. Mohsin Fani, no doubt, states that even after the accession of Shah Jahan the Guru continued in the employ of the Mughal Government, but it appears that the position had very soon to be abandoned. Whatever the immediate reason might be, it is clear that the policy that the Guru had been pursuing was bound, sooner or later, to bring him into collision with the Government and it speaks a good deal for his ability and political skill that he succeeded in avoiding the conflict so long. That the Guru was becoming a potential source of danger to the established order and a rallying

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 43—49.

point of disaffection is clearly shown by his alleged recruitment of malcontents and fugitives from justice and the asylum that he extended to disaffected chiefs.¹ Besides his own regular followers, he had, as we have seen, also enlisted bands of Pathan mercenaries, and the free-booters and dacoits that had entered freely into his ranks made him the centre of a turbulent and dangerous crowd. And it should not be forgotten that behind all this was a, more or less, compact organisation and religious ideals of a highly intense fervour. Thus the situation which had arisen towards the close of Guru Arjan's pontificate and which we have already discussed, was aggravated further, and though it might seem that compared with the mighty resources of the Mughal Empire all this was insignificant and hardly worthy of serious notice, its potentiality could not be denied. It was primarily the Guru's acceptance of office under the Government which enabled him to get on peacefully so long, for it had the direct result of legalising his irregularities to some extent, and of disarming the suspicions of the local authorities.

However, this position could no longer be maintained and very soon after Shah Jahan's accession open quarrel broke out. It so happened that one day when Shah Jahan had gone out hunting near Amritsar, the Guru also was similarly occupied. The Guru's followers and the servants of the imperial hunt quarrelled about a bird, and finally the imperialists were driven out with slaughter. This was too great an offence to be lightly passed over, and "the enemies of the Guru thought it a good opportunity to revive the charges against him, and to remind the Emperor of his alleged misdeeds." An expedition under Mukhlis Khan was sent against Guru Hargobind and a battle was fought in and around Amritsar. The Sikhs describe the battle in great

¹ It is said that Ram Pratap, the fugitive Raja of Jaisalmer, took refuge with Hargobind and that Yar Khan and Khwaja Sarai, dismissed commanders of the Mughal army, entered the Guru's asylum. (Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 106, foot-note 1). We are further told that two Pathan nobles, named Anwar and Hasan Khan, left the service of the Government and took refuge with Hargobind. (*Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*. See also Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 100).

detail¹ and unanimously affirm that the Guru came out completely victorious. Mohsin Fani, however, says: "At Ramdaspur (Amritsar) Hargobind sustained an attack of the army, which Shah Jahan, the shadow of God, sent against him, and the Guru's property was then plundered."² It seems that the Sikh accounts also corroborate Mohsin Fani, though in a curious way. It is stated that the Sikh detachment at Lohgarh (something of a fortress outside the city) was too small to cope with the invaders. The Muhammadans made short work of them and took possession of the Guru's palace. As the coming day had been fixed for the marriage of the Guru's daughter, Viro, sweets had been stored in the house for the marriage feast. The Muhammadans "gorged themselves to repletion" and "surfeited by the Guru's sweets" could not help sleeping, when they were surprised by the Guru's men and entirely routed, Mukhlis Khan himself being killed in the fray.³ It is needless to discuss the merits of this story. Suffice it to say that clearly the Guru's house was plundered by the Muhammadans on this occasion and that his so-called victory could not prevent his hasty retreat from Amritsar. Mohsin Fani says that the Guru fled to Kartarpur,⁴ and the Sikh accounts also bear him out.⁵

It does not seem that Guru Hargobind remained long at Kartarpur, which was situated in the Jalandhar Doab between the Ravi and the Beas. He continued his journey, crossed the Beas and "pitched his camp on the tumulus of an ancient village." The Guru decided that this was a very suitable site for the foundation of a city, and ordered that the foundation should be laid out immediately and the whole work completed without delay. The people of the locality, we are told, received the Guru in a friendly manner but the landlord and chaudhuri of the place, a Khatri of the Gherar tribe named Bhagwan Das, created

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 82—93. *Gur Bilas* (published by Gulab Singh and Sons), pp. 271—291. *Panth Prakash*, pp. 113, 114.

² *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 275.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 84. *Panth Prakash*, p. 113.

⁴ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 275.

⁵ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 96. *Panth Prakash*, p. 114.

difficulties which ended in a fray in which the landlord lost his life. His son Ratan Chand allied himself with Karm Chand, the son of Chandu Shah, and complained to the Subahdar of Jalandhar, who sent a small army against the Guru. Hargobind, however, succeeded in beating it back and the establishment of Sri Hargobindpur, as the place came to be called, then proceeded without any further disturbance.¹

After this the Guru appears to have remained in peace for some time but his fondness for horses and the almost incurable habit of the officials to seize these whenever one of a good breed and fleetness could be found,² again involved him in conflict with the Government. It is said that two *masands* named Bakht Mal and Tara Chand were bringing two horses "of surpassing beauty and fleetness" for the Guru, but these again were seized by the Emperor's officials. An ardent follower of the Guru, named Bidhi Chand, who had formerly been a notorious highwayman and robber, succeeded in recovering the horses from the Emperor's stable at Lahore. Thereupon an army was sent against the Guru. Hargobind thought it prudent "to seek shelter in some advantageous position" and he is said to have retired to the wastes of Bhatinda south of the Sutlej, where it might be useless or dangerous to follow him. There, near the village of Lahira, another battle was fought and this time also the imperialists were beaten back. This is said to have happened in 1631.

Mohsin Fani does not make any clear reference to the two actions described above. But he says that before and after the battle of Kartarpur, the last of Guru Hargobind's battles against the Mughal Government, "he encountered great dangers of war." As the battle of Amritsar is definitely referred to, it seems that in the meantime, *i.e.*, between the first battle, that of Amritsar, and the last battle, that of Kartarpur, the Guru had to engage

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 102—119. *Panth Prakash*, p. 115. See also Macauliffe's foot-note on p. 104.

² Besides the instances given in the Sikh records we have one from Mohsin Fani as well. We are told that Sadah, a devoted Sikh, bought three capital horses of Irak for the Guru but they were seized by a tyrant named Khalil Beg. (*Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 284).

in some other minor actions. And the remark, "with the aid of God he escaped unhurt, though he lost his property,"¹ seems to indicate that he did not meet with decisive reverses. Mohsin Fani's remark, however, may as well refer to the personal safety of Guru Hargobind, but, nevertheless, it is to be noticed that the Guru's last battle was fought at Kartarpur, and therefore it is clear that after the battle of Lahira Hargobind found himself strong enough to leave his retreat and return to the plains. Thus it seems that inspite of what Mohsin Fani says, the Sikh claim of a victory at Lahira cannot be entirely discounted. We are told that the Guru had taken up a very advantageous position. "The Guru's army was so disposed round the only tank in the area that when the enemy arrived they could not obtain access to its water, and thus must inevitably perish from thirst."² It appears that the imperialists could not cope with the natural difficulties of the situation and Hargobind had not much difficulty in beating them back.

After this the Guru watched his opportunity and soon returned to Kartarpur. He appears to have lived for some time in peace, but troubles again commenced through the defection of Painda Khan. Who this Painda Khan was is not wholly clear. On the authority of some Sikh accounts Cunningham states : "The mother of one Painda Khan, who had subsequently risen to some local eminence, had been the nurse of Hargobind, and the Guru had ever been liberal to his foster-brother."³ From Macauliffe's account it simply appears that Painda Khan was a Pathan mercenary,⁴ who entered the Guru's service and rose high in his favour. He had led the Guru's army in the battle of Amritsar, and it was chiefly to his valour and ability that Hargobind's success was due. Mohsin Fani merely states that he was the son of Fattah Khan Ganaida,⁵ while Irvine makes him an imperial commander.⁶ Irvine was perhaps led to this belief

¹ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 275.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 179. *Panth Prakash*, p. 117.

³ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁴ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 275.

⁶ Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I, p. 77.

by the fact that Painda Khan commanded the troops against Hargobind at the time of the battle of Kartarpur. However, this Painda Khan is said to have quarrelled with the Guru about a hawk,¹ and joined the imperialists. Another expedition was now sent against the Guru under the leadership of Painda Khan, and it is stated that the imperialists were again totally defeated and Painda Khan himself was slain.² Mohsin Fani also seems to corroborate the Sikh chroniclers, because he, too, says that on this occasion Mir Baderah and Painda Khan found their death.³ We do not know who this Mir Baderah was; most probably he was an imperial officer who had accompanied the expedition, but there can be no doubt that Mohsin Fani's Painda Khan is identical with the man whom we have been discussing.

The rest of the Guru's adventures is soon told. Mohsin Fani says: "At last Hargobind retired from the war at Kartarpur to Bhagwarh and because, there, in the vicinity of Lahore, he met with difficulties, he betook himself thence in haste to Geraitpur, which lies in the mountainous district of the Punjab."⁴ The Sikh records also state that after the battle of Kartarpur, which is said to have taken place in 1634, the Guru left the place and in the course of his journey reached Phagwarh. "As the town was on the road to Lahore, whence reinforcements could easily be sent against him, he continued his march to Kiratpur."⁵ It is easily understandable that with his slender resources it was not possible for the Guru to maintain an attitude of open defiance

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 58. The Sikh records make the issue a bit wider. A Sikh named Chitar Sain presented a horse, a hawk, a dress and some military weapons to the Guru, who gave the hawk to his son Gurditta and the rest to Painda Khan. But Asman Khan, the son-in-law of Painda Khan, took possession of these with the assistance of his mother-in-law and in addition stole Gurditta's hawk. When asked about the hawk, Painda Khan denied that it was in his house and the Guru drove him out. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 190—193. *Panth Prakash*, p. 118. See Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 111, foot-note 2).

² Macauliffe, *ibid.*, pp. 198—212. *Panth Prakash*, pp. 18-119.

³ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 275.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 213. *Panth Prakash*, p. 119.

any longer and so, even though he came out victorious at Kartarpur, he thought it prudent to take refuge in the hill retreat.

Thus ends the story of Guru Hargobind's quarrels with the Mughal Government. Forster says: "The vein of incongruous story which runs through the achievements of this militant priest precludes the derivation of any historical use."¹ This is no doubt true if the Sikh accounts are taken by themselves but, fortunately for us, the account given in the *Dabistan*, scrappy though it is, enables us to check the Sikh records, and, as we have seen above, the two agree on many important points and almost entirely with regard to the general sequence of events. The attempt of the Sikh writers to give an exaggerated importance to the exploits of their Guru cannot possibly mislead us, for it is certain that Hargobind's adventures were, after all, what Irvine calls "a petty revolt;"² otherwise they must have been noticed by contemporary Muhammadan writers.

V. Guru Hargobind in Retirement

For the rest of his life till his death in 1645 Guru Hargobind appears to have lived in peace at Kiratpur. The place was situated at the base of the Kahlur mountain and we are told that the town had been founded by Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Hargobind. The place, it appears, had once been visited by Guru Nanak, where he met Budhan Shah, a Muslim saint, who was still living there when Baba Gurditta founded the town according to the instructions of his father. The place was named Kiratpur because "God's praises (*Kirat*) were ever to be sung there."³ Guru Hargobind now made it his permanent residence and he seems to have eagerly availed himself of the peace and tranquillity that the retreat offered and which he so much needed after the trials and anxieties of his previous adventures.

We do not know much of Hargobind's life at Kiratpur.

¹ Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

² Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 77.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 140-142.

This much, however, seems clear that the policy of armed resistance had perforce to be abandoned for the time being¹ and the Guru engaged himself in peaceful activities. Hitherto, he had not had much time to devote to the very important work of propaganda and organisation and it appears that Baba Gurditta had been entrusted with this part of the Guru's responsibilities. The Guru, however, had now leisure enough to look to these matters and it is said that under Hargobind's direction Gurditta, in 1636, appointed four preachers, Phul, Almast, Gonda and Balu *Hasna*, who founded the *Dhuans* or hearths² and spread the message of Sikhism far and wide. It is also claimed by the Sikhs that the Guru acquired a great influence over the Hill Rajas, many of whom are said to have been converted to Sikhism. The Sikh chroniclers state that in the days of Guru Amar Das the Raja of Haripur had accepted Sikhism,³ and that the Hill Rajas of Kulu, Suket, Haripur and Chamba visited Guru Arjan and became his followers as the Raja of Mandi had previously done.⁴ Guru Hargobind is said to have converted the Rajas of Kangra and Pilibit,⁵ so that when he retired to Kiratpur, Sikhism had already become a powerful influence in the hill tracts. Now, the appearance of the Guru in person and his continued residence at Kiratpur must have strengthened the hold of Sikhism much further and this is testified to by the author of the *Dabistan*. In this connection, Mohsin Fani narrates a very interesting story. The inhabitants of the country of Raja Tarachand worshipped idols, and on the summit of a fortified mountain they had raised an image of Narayana, whither Rajas and other eminent persons made pilgrimages. When Guru Hargobind went to that place, a Sikh named Bhairo entered the temple and struck off the nose of the

¹ Khazan Singh, however, says that even after his retirement to Kiratpur the Guru, at least on one occasion, engaged himself in military adventure. It is said that in 1642 the Guru joined forces with Raja Tarachand and helped him to defeat the Nawab of Rupar. (*History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. 139).

² Teja Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 62.

⁴ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 70.

⁵ *Panth Prakash*.

idol. The Rajas complained to the Guru, but Bhairo denied the charge. The servants of the Rajas, however, declared that they positively knew the man. Bhairo replied: "O Rajas, ask you the god; if he tells my name, kill me." The Rajas said: "You blockhead! how shall the god speak?" Bhairo laughed and answered: "Now it is clear who is the blockhead: if the god cannot defend his head nor point out the man who struck him, what benefit do you expect from him, and why do you venerate his strength?" Bhairo's answer is said to have had a tremendous influence and Mohsin Fani says that "from this time the disciples of the Guru increased considerably, and in this mountainous country, as far as the frontiers of Thibet and Khota, the name of Musalman was not heard."¹ Subsequent events, however, give us a wholly different picture. They clearly show that Sikhism had never succeeded in making much headway in the hills and that the Hill Rajas remained to the last the most implacable enemies of Guru Gobind Singh and his cause. The Kangra Hills have always been the greatest stronghold of Hinduism, and throughout this tract the ascendancy of a type of Rajput society is well-marked. Political privilege, social exclusiveness, and tribal pride, all combined to induce the Hill Rajas to present a united front against Sikhism and Guru Gobind Singh's mission in the hills proved, more or less, a conspicuous failure. It is thus evident that even if there had been a movement in favour of Sikhism during the days of Guru Hargobind, it was only temporary. However, the Guru apparently lived in friendly relations with the Hill Rajas, and that he had gained a considerable reputation is proved by the fact that Perah Kaivan, Yazadanian, was moved by the name of the Guru and came to pay him a visit.²

But it seems that because of domestic difficulties and sorrows this part of the Guru's life was not as peaceful and tranquil as it otherwise might have been. The Sikh records unanimously describe Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru

¹ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 276.

² *Ibid.*, p. 280.

Hargobind, as a person of a saintly disposition and as in every way qualified to be the coming leader of Sikhism. We have seen that he had been entrusted with the very important work of organisation and propaganda and there can be no doubt that he was giving a very good account of himself. Unfortunately, Gurditta came to differences with his father about marrying the daughter of a Sikh named Naghura but he had sense enough not to persist when his father definitely cursed the contemplated union.¹ Next, he is said to have displeased his father by his attempt to exhibit miraculous power, a proceeding which the Sikh Gurus always looked down upon with horror and contempt.² At the top of all these came Gurditta's untimely death in 1638 and this must have been a very great blow to the Guru, the more so as Gurditta's eldest son, Dhir Mal, took up an attitude hostile to his grandfather. The Sikh records tell us that when the Guru left for Kiratpur, this Dhir Mal, with his mother Nathi, remained behind at Kartarpur and took possession of the Guru's property there, as also of the priceless original copy of the *Granth Sahib*. He had been asked several times to hand over the sacred volume to the Guru but, under one pretext or another, he kept the book with himself and systematically refused the Guru's invitations to come to Kiratpur. When Gurditta died the Guru asked for the holy volume in order to recite it for the repose of his dead son's soul and further invited Dhir Mal to come over to Kiratpur in order to receive a turban at the Guru's hands in token of his succession to his father's status and property but we are told that Dhir Mal was already in concourse with the Guru's enemies and turned a deaf ear to all his proposals. At last, persuaded by the importunities of his mother, Dhir Mal is said to have made a visit to Kiratpur but by his haughtiness and arrogance he soon made the place too hot for him and returned to Kartarpur.³ He seems to have been under the delusion that, as he was in possession of the *Granth*, "which was the outward and tangible sign of Guruship," he would not have

¹ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, pp. 281, 282.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 220, 221.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 222, 230—32.

much difficulty in gaining the *gaddi* in the end, whomsoever Guru Hargobind might nominate as his successor.

This conduct of Dhir Mal must have greatly embittered the last days of the Guru and he also must have felt deeply the loss of relations and friends. One of his sons, Atal Rai, had died young while the Guru was still at Amritsar and next came the death of Damodari, his first wife, in 1631. Baba Gurditta, as we have seen, died in 1638 and some years later Marwahi, the Guru's second wife, followed. Of the men who had served the Guru unflinchingly through all his trials and tribulations, several were already dead, notably Jit Mal and Bidhi Chand. The Guru now felt that his end also was drawing near and he proceeded to make arrangements for the succession. It is said that some Sikhs pressed upon him that he should appoint Suraj Mal, his second son, as his successor but the Guru said: "The Guruship is a heavy burden. Only the worthy can support it. The aspirant to it may know how to prophesy, but should keep his secrets to himself. Though he sees offences he should forgive them. He should assist his Sikhs in their time of tribulation and give servants the reward of their services. Deeming the things of this world perishable, he should not covet them. Only he who possesseth these virtues is worthy to be a Guru."¹ Suraj Mal was undoubtedly a highly worthy person in all respects but still, in the Guru's opinion, he did not come up to this high and exacting ideal. His choice fell on Har Rai, the second son of Baba Gurditta, and duly nominating him as the successor Guru Hargobind departed to the other world. This is said to have happened, according to Mohsin Fani, in 1645.²

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 227.

² *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 280. Some Sikh records state that Guru Hargobind died in 1638. (*Sikhan de Raj di Bikhia*, for instance; see Court's translation, p. 27). Cunningham says: "the manuscript accounts consulted place the Guru's death variously in A.D. 1637, 1638 and 1639; but they lean to the middle term." (Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 59, foot-note). Apparently on the authority of these records Trumpu places the Guru's death in 1638 and suggests that there must be some mistake in the Arabic ciphers of the *Dabistan*. But the *Dabistan* is corroborated by the *Panth Prakash* and the records followed by Macauliffe, as also by one of the manuscripts discovered by Gurbux Singh at Dacca.

VI. Guru Hargobind—the Man and the Leader

Guru Hargobind appears to have been a much misunderstood man. While, no doubt, credit is given to him for having inaugurated a policy which was to lead slowly and assuredly to political and military advancement, and which for ever prevented the possibility of the disciples “relapsing into the limited merit or utility of monks and mendicants”,¹ it is sometimes hinted that in other respects he fell short of the high ideals that had guided his predecessors. The point is mentioned against him that he did not compose a single line of verse,² whereas the *Granth Sahib* remains for ever the living embodiment of the achievements of his predecessors in this respect. Indeed, it appears that many among his contemporaries came to think that the lure of politics and the glamour of arms were leading him away from the true path of a religious and spiritual leader. The observations of Pertabmal,³ who hinted that under the guidance of Guru Hargobind the Sikhs were degenerating into so many buffoons, have already been referred to, as also the misapprehensions of the Sikhs of the old school recorded by Bhai Gurdas. But it appears to us that the Bhai hits the nail on the head when he says:

“The truth within him cannot possibly be concealed ; . .

He supporteth a burden intolerable to others and asserteth not himself.”

Looked at superficially, the Guru's activities might seem inconsistent or even grotesque, but a true appreciation of the objective situation was bound to reveal what a clever and well-

(*Dacca Review*, 1916, p. 378). Further, Mohsin Fani states that he himself saw the Guru in 1643. Trumpp's surmise, therefore, cannot be correct.

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

² Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxv.

³ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 113. This Pertabmal appears to have been a very interesting man, if the anecdotes narrated by Mohsin Fani are to be believed. Of him Mohsin Fani writes: “Pertabmal Chadah (Chadah is a tribe of Kshatriyas) is a Jnani, that is a pious man ; his native country is Sialkut ; he attained to perfection in the exercise of virtue ; he is not confined to any faith or religion ; but knows that every religion is a road leading towards God ; he sees in every face a friend revealed.”

conceived part he had been playing in exceptionally difficult circumstances.

Both externally and internally the situation was changing and the policy of the Guru had perforce to be adjusted to the new environment. The organisational development of Sikhism had mostly taken place during the tolerant days of Akbar who had never interfered with it; he had, on the contrary, even helped the Gurus in various ways. But the execution of Guru Arjan and Hargobind's own imprisonment definitely showed that sterner days were ahead and that the old policy of mere peaceful organisation no longer sufficed. The policy of wide toleration that Akbar had initiated was gradually modified by his successors, till at last in the hands of Aurangzib it was given a complete go by. Guru Arjan had foreseen and Guru Hargobind also clearly saw that it would no longer be possible to protect the Sikh community and its organisation without the aid of arms and the way in which he proceeded to secure this end speaks a good deal for his sagacity and his shrewd political sense. It seems to us that Hargobind's acceptance of office under Jahangir was a fine stroke of policy as it greatly disarmed the suspicions of the local authorities. His connection with the Government served him as a cloak and he succeeded in maturing his plans without any interference from the authorities. It should not be forgotten that any open defiance was entirely out of the question and could only lead to utter ruin. The only alternative was what the Guru followed. He lived in the friendliest of terms with the Government and organised his defensive resources under the cover of that friendship. The Guru gathered an army, enlisted Pathan mercenaries and encouraged malcontents before the very eyes of the local officials. Trumpp says that the authorities "were either too short-sighted or indolent or too powerless to stop effectually the concourse of such a turbulent and dangerous crowd,"¹ but the truth seems to be that the Guru proved too clever for them.

It may also be true that the influence of the saint Mian Mir proved, as we have already suggested, a potent factor in smooth-

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxiv.

ing over the rough patches in the Guru's dealings with the Emperor. Moreover, it seems that in a centralised despotism like the Mughal Government a good deal of local irregularities might be excused through the intercession of a powerful advocate in the imperial Court. The point of having an advocate at Court was regarded as so important that even a new viceroy is asked to "secure a trustworthy mediator or friend at Court to report promptly to the Emperor and take his orders," and he is further advised to give presents to the mediator, for "when people visit the tomb of dead saints, they offer flowers and sweetmeats for gaining their favours. How much more are presents necessary to gain the favour of living men!"¹ The Sikh chronicles mention, again and again, how the powerful advocacy of Wazir Khan operated in favour of the Gurus even against the Provincial authorities of Lahore,² and even if we make due allowance for exaggerations, it does not seem improbable that the influence of Wazir Khan at the imperial Court was always an important factor in favour of Hargobind and indirectly helped the development of his plans. But it was primarily the Guru's tact and his continued connection with the Government which enabled him to organise a defensive force on which he might fall back if the occasion arose.

But all this the people could not see and they complained that the Guru had been concouring with the enemies of his faith. The exigencies of his position and his connection with the Government did not allow him to remain continually at Amritsar and the people complained that the Guru had been living a roving and a wandering life. Indeed, the new situation and the adjustments that were necessary to meet it could not be appreciated and a good deal of misunderstanding arose. Moreover, when the Guru's career was reviewed as a whole one might say that the new policy, after all, did not serve him well. In spite of his alleged victories he was driven from post to pillar till at last he was compelled to seek refuge in the hills. And, as Wilson says, the rising of the Sikhs under Guru Hargobind

¹ Sarkar, *Mughal Administration*, pp. 82, 83.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 96, 187, 195.

“seems to have been regarded as a mere local disturbance, involving no political crisis, much less as indicating the future development of an independent State.”¹ But it is apparent that whatever might have been the immediate results of Guru Hargobind’s military adventures, looked at from a wider standpoint, the Guru’s victories were certainly not as useless as they seem. These successes against innumerable odds could not but inspire the Sikhs with self-confidence and give them an exalted sense of their own worth. They had hitherto been kept under heels by the Mussalmans, but now they learnt, for the first time, that under proper guidance and control they could meet the Mussalmans on an equal footing or even gain the better. This consciousness of their own worth arising out of their own trying experiences became, as we shall see later on, a great national asset. Guru Hargobind demonstrated a possibility—the possibility of the Sikhs’ openly assuming an attitude of defiance against the Mughal Government—and considerably prepared the way for the thorough reformation that they received in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh. But all this was much more than what the Guru’s contemporaries could either see or understand, and it is no wonder that Hargobind was misunderstood and his career misrepresented.

At the same time, it will not do for us to forget that the nature of the Guru’s following had been changing and produced reactions which were also bound to lead to misapprehensions. We have seen that the exigencies of his position led Guru Hargobind to enlist even persons of questionable antecedents in his service, and though in some cases, as in that of Bidhi Chand, a notorious robber, who ended his days as a devout and saintly follower of the Guru², the new contact led to complete reclamation, it would be too much to expect that this could be true in the majority of cases. The hope of booty and plunder must have attracted many of these to the Guru much more than any real religious motive and their activities could not but discredit the

¹ J. R. A. S., 1846, p. 46.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 225, 226.

movement to which they formally belonged.¹ All this seems probable though, naturally, the Sikh chronicles do not support any such conclusion. Be that as it may, far more important for our purposes is the fact that as a result of the propaganda work, particularly of Guru Arjan, who is said to have converted the entire Jat peasantry of the Manjha tract, a new situation was arising which called for new methods. The Sikhs had been increasing greatly in numbers and most of these new recruits were Jats. There can be no doubt that by the time of Guru Hargobind the Jats formed by far the most preponderant element in the Sikh community and with their accession in increasing numbers new forces were bound to be released. As we have suggested elsewhere,² the permission to take animal diet that was given by Guru Hargobind might very well have been a necessary and inevitable concession to the traditional habits of the Jats and it becomes incumbent on us to acquaint ourselves with the character and temperament of these people and their traditions and tendencies so that we might understand more clearly the possible reactions.

Now then, who were these Jats? We must confess that we do not definitely know. The question of the origin of the Jats, and with them, of the Rajputs and Gujars, has long engaged the attention of eminent scholars but the results hitherto achieved have not been conclusive. We can only say that there is a general consensus of opinion³ that all these tribes were foreigners, who entered India from their original home near the Oxus some time between the third and seventh centuries of the Christian era. There is also reason to believe that the Jats with whom we are primarily concerned, *viz.* the Jats of the Manjha and the Malwa tracts, came to their present habitats from the south and east, whatever might have been their original mode

¹ For instance, Mohsin Fani states that there was a disciple of Guru Hargobind, named Badhata, "who was at first a thief, and his disciples exercised later the profession of thieving; they showed themselves very obedient to the orders of their master, and believed that stealing for him deserved praise and recompense." (*Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 284).

² Volume I of this work, p. 270.

³ Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*, p. 97.

of intrusion.¹ The distribution of the Jats throughout the Punjab and the lower Indus valley seems to suggest that they came from outside India through Baluchistan and spread gradually over the Southern Punjab and a considerable portion of Rajputana. Another wave of migration commenced and this time they moved in a northerly direction and settled in the valleys of the Jumna and the Sutlej.

These conclusions are, however, highly problematical and fortunately they do not affect our main enquiry. We are primarily concerned with the characteristics of these people and, though direct evidence regarding the period of which we have been speaking is rather scarce, it is not difficult to guess the position in a general way from a study of certain survivals and the influences still at work. In the first place, almost all writers on the subject are, more or less, agreed that one of the fundamental traits in the Jat character has been the instinct of tribal freedom and of tribal kinship. In his learned work on *Punjab Customary Law* Tupper tries to show that in the Punjab the history of property has been the history of tribal disintegration. "There is abundant evidence that collective property preceded several ownership. In many places the irruptions of particular tribes or the turbulent conquests of those Sikh fighting corporations known as misls have superimposed rights originating in simple violence on subjugated cultivating communities, but if we penetrate below the surface.....we find in every district that joint property still often resides in communities larger than mere families."² Clear traces of communal property invariably survive and "the idea of common blood and descent has by no means died out."³

¹ Denzil Ibbetson, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

² Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, Vol. II, Introduction, pp. 1, 2.

Soon after the annexation of the Punjab investigations were started with regard to the customary laws of the province with the view of discovering some principles on which they might be codified. The enquiry was continued by successive officials and soon a considerable body of literature grew up on the subject. This, together with his own independent researches on the subject, formed the immediate background of Tupper's work. It will thus be seen that Tupper's remarks hold good regarding the position towards the middle of the 19th century.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

The distinguishing characteristic of the "Zemindari estate" which survives in almost every district is undivided proprietary right, and even where the *pattidari* tenure has begun disintegration the communal origin of property still regulates its distribution.¹ Tupper's conclusion is that "the general diffusion of property, either still communal or once wearing that character, is apparent," and of the Jats particularly, he says that whether Sikh, Hindu or Mussalman, "they are agriculturists, their organisation by clans is notorious, and they are habitually grouped in village communities. Wherever Jats are to be found, there tribal influence and kinship are still at work."²

If such was the position when the sceptre of the Punjab passed from the Sikhs to the British, tribal influences and tribal cohesion must have been stronger at the time of which we have been speaking, for all authorities are agreed that the Sikh regime was attended with circumstances which inevitably led to tribal disintegration and the creation of new proprietary rights. Specially during the period of the Misl, which have been very aptly described as "fighting corporations,"³ the very life of the community depended on military strength and necessarily physical prowess counted far more than age, birth or other considerations. The most important tie between the chiefs and their dependents was one of military service and a new system of tenure, not unlike the feudal, automatically grew up. Avoiding details it may at once be pointed out that the different kinds of tenures that came into existence, whether *pattidari* or *misaldari*, *tobadari* or *jagirdari*, were all equally destructive of tribal ownership. The settlement of a miscellaneous collection of cultivators by capitalists who obtained grants of land on condition of bringing it under cultivation, is said to have been specially encouraged under Sikh rule⁴ and the result, as can be easily seen, was the creation of new proprietary rights. In short, as Tupper says, "the general result of Sikh rule was to destroy the old tenures

¹ Tupper, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, Introduction, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³ *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁴ Ibbetson, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

of the country" and "reduce squatters and inheritors to the same level."¹

There can thus be no doubt that tribal solidarity among the Jats was exceptionally strong during Mughal days and that tribal considerations formed an important factor in their daily lives. The strength of tribal cohesion and exclusiveness is also indicated in other ways. Tribal feuds survive to this day in the refusal to intermarry. The Dhillons would intermarry with all *gots* except with the Bals. "The story is that a family bard or mirasi from a Dhillon village was refused help, when in difficulties in the Bal country, and in revenge cursed the whole Bal clan. Mirasis were in those days more of a power than they are now, and the Dhillon clan took up the feud, which survives to this day in the refusal to intermarry."² The Panuns of Nowshera and Chandriwala will not intermarry with the Sindhu Jats of the Sirhali neighbourhood and the reason is said to be "a murder by a Sirhali man of a Panun connection by marriage." Instances like these might be multiplied. The Sikh chronicles also, in many places, refer to the tribal solidarity of the Jats of the Manjha and the Malwa tracts. For instance, we are told that "Kala and Karam Chand, two brothers of the Marhaj tribe, complained to Guru Har Rai that the people of the Kaura tribe did not allow them to live among them. The Guru called Jait Pirana, the head of the Kaura tribe, and endeavoured to induce him to give five ploughs of land to the complainant for their maintenance." It is said that Jait Pirana replied with the characteristic Punjabi proverb, "*gras daiye, bas na daiye*," i.e. give a morsel to eat but not land to live upon, and "the Guru was at last compelled to advise the Marhaj brothers to take forcible possession of the land around them and call it Marhaj."³ Ziwan, a young Sikh, gave up his life on the call of the Guru, and the Bairars, the tribe to which he belonged, hastened to the Guru to express their displeasure.⁴ When Tegh Bahadur was executed

¹ Tupper, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

² *Amritsar Gazetteer*, 1914, pp. 35, 36.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 292, 293.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

at Delhi, a Sikh belonging to the Labana tribe was heartily grieved to see the beloved Guru's dead body publicly exposed and reproached his *tribesmen* about it.¹ All these very clearly show that tribal consciousness was a very living factor in the life of the Jats. We would now bring this argument to a close by referring to one other matter of a different character but which proves the strength of tribal organisation. Ibbetson is of opinion that "it is a mistake to suppose that the village community wholly supersedes tribal organisation. Very generally tribes hold compact territories." In support of his statement he mentions the characteristic "thapa organisation."² "The villages of the tribe constitute one or more thapas or tribal groups of village communities held together by feudal ties and by the fact or fiction of common ancestry." He adds that "under the Moghuls the revenue administration used to be based upon these thapas, the revenue being assessed upon the group of villages as a whole, and being distributed among them by the Headman of the collective villages under the presidency of the Headman of the parent village."

Next, in attempting to form a correct estimate of the character of these people, it is important to remember that tradition is exceptionally strong on the point that many of them had been comparatively recent immigrants to the tracts they occupied.³ Lepel Griffin is of opinion that the ancestors of the Malwa Jats were simple Hindu peasants, who, about the middle of the sixteenth century emigrated from Jaisalmer.⁴ It is said of the Hatiar Jats that they emigrated from Shahpur to Gujarat in Akbar's time.⁵ The Tenwana Jats first entered Mathura and Aligarh as late as 1600.⁶ Indeed, migrations on a small scale were continually going on. Sarkar says: "In order to understand the real cause of many of the village disorders in Mughal

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 388.

² Ibbetson, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

³ Ibbetson, *ibid.*, p. 104. Rose, *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, pp. 369, 370.

⁴ Lepel Griffin, *Laws of Inheritance to Sikh Chiefships*, p. 3.

⁵ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 330.

⁶ J. N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. III, p. 20.

times, we must bear in mind that the population was dynamic, not static. Internal movements of the people were constantly going on. In different generations different tribes were migrating to new districts and trying to push away the old settlers and make a home for themselves.¹ Villages quarrelled with villages,² tribes with tribes, and the weaker among them were always liable to be ousted by the stronger and the more compact. In such a situation tribal cohesion was practically the only safeguard against ruin or even extinction and it becomes easier to understand why tribal instincts were so strong and survived even when the objective situation had changed in a manner which made their continuance no longer a necessity. It is also important to remember that with tribal organisation certain notions of tribal freedom went hand in hand and we might well surmise that the Jats were used to a certain type of self-government of their own, however limited and rudimentary it might have been.

As we have already said, direct information about these people, before a section of them attained political importance, is very meagre but, nevertheless, the curious fact is that the few references that we get in historical records, here and there, almost uniformly bring out two of the most fundamental traits in the character of these people. Firishta says that at the time of its return from Somnath the army of Sultan Mahmud had been molested by the Jats, who resided near the Jood mountains. Mahmud soon returned to punish them and as the country was intersected by rivers "he ordered 1400 boats to be built, each of which was armed with six iron spikes, projecting from the prows and sides, to prevent their being boarded by the enemy, who were expert in that kind of warfare." The Jats, on their part, sent their women and children, together with their most valuable effects, to the neighbouring islands and prepared to meet the

¹ J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 20.

² An interesting example of this is found in the Sikh records. It is said that "Wadali originally founded by Chambal and Man tribes had become a prosperous village, and on this account the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages made war upon them. The Wadali people unaccustomed to a marauding life were defeated," and besought the mediation of Guru Arjan. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 34).

Sultan. A bloody battle ensued and ultimately the Jats suffered a total defeat, not for any want of courage or skill but mainly because of the projecting spikes of the Moslem boats which created havoc when they ran against the simpler Jat boats.¹ Next we hear of the Jats in connection with a rising of theirs which Muhammad bin Tughlaq had to suppress. On this occasion they formed *Mandals* round Sunam and Samana, withheld tribute, and plundered the roads.² In 1398 when Timur marched through the jungle from Ahruni in Karnal to Tohana, he found a tract inhabited by Jats who were Mussalmans only in name, and who were without equals in theft and highway robbery; they plundered caravans on the road and were a terror to Mussalmans and travellers. On Timur's approach the Jats fled, but he pursued them and put 2,000 of the "demon-like" Jats to the sword.³ Again, Babar writes: "If one go into Hindusthan the Jats and Guzars always pour down in countless hordes from hill and plain for loot in bullock and buffalo. These ill-omened peoples are just senseless oppressors. Formerly their doings did not concern us much because the country was the enemy's; but they began the same senseless work after we had taken it. When we reached Sialkot, they fell in tumult on poor and needy folks who were coming out of the town to our camp, and stripped them bare. I had the silly thieves sought for, and ordered two or three of them cut to pieces."⁴ It has even been said that occasionally a single Jat village would plunder an imperial baggage train.⁵ These references may be few and far between but they unmistakably show that the Jats were habitual plunderers. Indeed, all competent authorities are agreed that one of the fundamental traits in the Jat character has been the marauding instinct, and it is significant that the proverbial wisdom of the villages describes a Jat thus: "He is your friend only so long as you have a stick in your hand. If he runs amock it takes God

¹ Briggs, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power*, Vol. I. pp. 81, 82.

² Elliott, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. III, p. 245.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 428, 429, 492, 493.

⁴ Beveridge, *Memoirs of Babar*, Vol. III, p. 454.

⁵ Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 55.

to hold him ”;¹ “a Jat, a Bhat, a caterpillar, and a widow woman, these four are best hungry. If they eat their fill they do harm ”; “the Jat, like a wound, is better kept when bound ”;² and so on. Ibbetson is of opinion that the Jat is usually content to cultivate his lands and pay his revenue in peace and quietness if people would let him do so, though when he goes wrong, he “takes to anything from gambling to murder with perhaps a preference for stealing other peoples’ wives and cattle.”³ It thus appears that there has been a predatory trait in the Jat character, which has made him impatient of control and prone to aggrandise himself at the expense of others.

At the same time, history affords us many examples to show that the Jats were fighters *par excellence* and that their courage did not fail even in the most desperate circumstances. We have seen that even the invincible Sultan Mahmud, whose name had already become a terror to the people of Northern India, had to fight desperately hard before he could bring them to their knees and that the much-dreaded Timur was no dread to them. We would mention here only one other incident which illustrates admirably the fighting qualities of the Jats. As a result of Aurangzib’s open attacks on Hinduism and the forcible removal of the curved stone railing presented by Dara Shukoh to Keshav Rai’s temple, the Jat peasantry of Mathura broke out in open rebellion in 1669 under the leadership of Gokla, the Zamindar of Tilpat. The pargana of Sadabad was looted and the disorder soon spread to the Agra district. The disturbances continued throughout the year and the Emperor had at last to take the field in person. The rebels were now most vigorously attacked, “when, being unable to resist any longer, many of them slaughtered their women and rushed upon the swords of the Moghuls, fighting with the recklessness of despair.” Next month, “after a very long and bloody contest they gave way before the superior artillery of the Moghuls, and fled to Tilpat which was besieged for three days and at last stormed on the point of the

¹ Risley, *People of India*, p. 132.

² Ibbetson, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

sword." But though the Jats lost their leader and suffered such a great reverse, disorders continued and even in March, 1670, Hassan Ali Khan was "engaged in enslaving and capturing the rebels, plundering their houses, extirpating their family, and dismantling their strong (mud) forts."¹ It is clear that a people who with no discipline and no resources could keep at bay the organised forces of a mighty Empire for about a year possessed military qualities of no mean order.

A question may, however, very well be raised that in the above review the Jats have mostly been taken in a lump and though, no doubt, a few references have been given which have a special application to the Manjha and the Malwa tracts, it may yet remain a matter of doubt as to how far the above conclusions hold true with regard to the Jats of those places. But all writers, who have given more than a passing attention to this question, are almost unanimous in holding that the Jats, whether Sikh, Hindu or Mussalman, and whether of the Central Punjab, the Eastern Punjab, the Doab or the lower Jumna valley, exhibit the same essential qualities. Speaking of the Jats of the western sub-montane or those settled in the foot of the hills west of Lahore Ibbetson, who may undoubtedly be regarded as an authority on the subject, remarks: "The Jat tribes now to be considered are essentially agricultural, and occupy the same social position as do those of the eastern plains, whom, indeed, they resemble in all respects."² There is no definite line of demarcation between the Jats of the eastern sub-montane and the Sikh Jats to the south, or the Jats of the western sub-montane to the west,³ and the south-eastern Jats, or those who occupy the Jumna districts, Jind, Rohtak and Hissar, "are the same people in every respect as the Jats of the Jamna-Ganges Doab and the lower Jamna valley, differing, however, in little save religion from the great Sikh tribes of the Malwa."⁴ Indeed, it has been

¹ J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 290—295.

² Ibbetson, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

stressed by several writers that change of religion hardly effects much change in the character of these people. As we have seen, the "demon-like" Jats who harassed Timur were "Mussalmans only in name," and we think that it requires no imagination to recognise a family resemblance between the Jats "who poured down in prodigious numbers from their hills and wilds in order to carry off oxen and buffaloes," and "plundered the Turki garrison on its way from Sialkot to Babar's camp"¹ and the Sikhs who likewise poured down from the hills, "fell upon the rear of Nadir Shah's army laden with the spoils of Delhi and carried away whatever they could lay their hands upon;"² or between the Jats who formed themselves into *mandals*, withheld tribute and plundered the roads, and the Sikhs, who in 1734 divided themselves into "*dals*" and opened a systematic campaign of plunder and rapine.³ Sarkar says that in the darkest days of Guru Gobind Singh's life his followers became plunderers who formed themselves into bands in order to harass the Mughal officers and raid parts of the Punjab, and he mentions a letter of Aurangzib in which the fate of one such band is described.⁴ But this was nothing new; the Sikhs were merely following the traditional tactics of the race to which they mostly belonged.

These were the people who, during the days of Guru Arjan and his son, began, in increasing numbers, to swell the ranks of Sikhism and it is not difficult to see that in order to accommodate these people within the system certain readjustments were bound to occur. For instance, the policy of non-resistance that Guru Amar Das adopted towards the Muhammadans who had settled at Goindwal and who constantly annoyed the Sikhs in various ways and his dictum that "it is not proper for saints to take revenge"⁵ would hardly have suited the temper and tradition of these people. Thus the situation, both external and internal, made an adherence to the earlier path of Sikhism, more or less, impossible and it is

¹ Elliott, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 240.

² Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 207.

⁴ Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 319.

⁵ Vol. I of this work, p. 173.

mainly the non-recognition of this basic fact that has been responsible for the charges levelled against the Guru.

The way in which the Guru met the situation speaks a good deal for his resourcefulness and shrewd practical sense. As we have already said, his acceptance of office under the Mughal Government was a fine stroke of policy, and the building of the fort of Sri Hargobindpur and the preparation in advance of a retreat at Kiratpur speak equally of his clear foresight. He maintained peace with the Government as long as he could, but he had no illusions regarding the outcome of the struggle if it did come after all and planned accordingly. This is why we find that he was never flustered and his equanimity was never disturbed, however desperate the situation might be. This cool imperturbability served him admirably throughout his life but his greatest assets appear to have been his lovable personality and his never-failing sense of humour, which made him the best of masters and the best of friends. This sense of humour did not desert the Guru even in the field of battle when his very life was hanging in the balance and made it easy for him to enjoy a joke at his own expense. Mohsin Fani relates several stories which amply illustrate this lovable trait in Guru Hargobind's character. We are told that in the battle of Kartarpur "a man aimed a blow at the Guru, who parried it, and struck him with his blade, saying: 'Not in that manner, but so the sword is used,' and with one blow he made an end of his foe." A companion of the Guru is said to have asked Mohsin Fani to explain the purport of the words with which the Guru struck his blow and he remarked: "It was to give instruction, as it belongs to a Guru to teach also how to strike a blow with a sword; for a Guru is called a teacher: he did not strike out of anger, which would have been blamable."¹ It appears to us that Mohsin Fani has been rather too serious with regard to this incident and it is more probable that it was nothing but an exhibition of the Guru's innate sense of humour. Be that as it may, Mohsin Fani further tells us that there was a Brahman named Deva who "counted himself among the wise. He visited the Guru, and seated him-

¹ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 275.

self one day upon the bed of Baba Jev, who was the son of a Guru. The people said: 'Do not sit there.' He asked: 'Why not?' They answered: 'This is the place of the Guru.' He said: 'Is perhaps the figure of a Guru not that of a man, or have I not a rational soul manifest in me? Or can I not enjoy what another eats or drinks?' This speech came to the ears of Guru Hargobind. He called that man before him, and said: 'O Deva! is not the whole world but one being?' He replied: 'It is.' The Guru pointed to an ass, and asked: 'Do you know what this is?' Deva replied: 'You are one with God, and therefore you are also this.' The Guru laughed and was not at all angry."¹ These anecdotes show clearly what an equable temper, what an abundant fund of humour and what a lovable personality the Guru possessed and partially explains why he was so passionately and zealously served by a devoted band of followers through all his trials and tribulations.

Mohsin Fani says that when, after Guru Hargobind's death, "they had placed his corpse upon the pyre, and when the fire rose up in high flames, a Rajput called Rajarama, who had been his servant, precipitated himself into the fire, and walked several paces in the midst of the flames, until he reached the feet of the corpse, and having laid his face upon the soles of the Guru's feet, he did not move until he expired. After him, the son of a Jat, who was in the service of Hargobind's son-in-law, leaped into the fire. Many other Sikhs wished to follow his example, but the Guru Harrai forbade it."² These eloquent examples of devotion and self-sacrifice enable us to understand the Guru's successes against the heaviest of odds and show conclusively what high esteem he commanded as a leader and as a man.

¹ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, pp. 279, 280.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 280, 281.

CHAPTER II

THE SUCCESSORS OF GURU HARGOBIND

I. Guru Har Rai

The onward march of consolidation and progress, which had been the chief characteristic of Sikhism under the successors of Guru Nanak, received a set-back after the death of Guru Hargobind and a period of disintegration commenced. Guru Arjan had practically completed the organisation of his followers on peaceful lines and under Guru Hargobind Sikhism had added unto itself an army, however weak or small it might have been. A tradition had thus been created which was destined to transform the entire ideology of the Sikhs and of Sikhism but that consummation was still more than half a century off, and, in the interval, a new situation arose in which, for a time, the forces of disruption succeeded in making considerable headway. The continued absence of the Guru from Amritsar, the rise of dissentient sects and rivals to the Guru, the deterioration of the *masand* system, the intervention of the state and such other factors of greater or lesser importance soon brought about a state of affairs in which the centrifugal tendencies were very much in evidence and when Guru Gobind Singh ascended the *gaddi* of his father he was faced with a situation that was well-nigh desperate.

Guru Hargobind, as we have seen, was succeeded by Har Rai, the second son of his eldest son Baba Gurditta. Unfortunately, from now onwards our materials become so unsatisfactory that it is not possible to attempt an account of the pontificate of Har Rai in any detail whatsoever. Mohsin Fani, who had been of so much assistance to us in reconstructing the history of Guru Hargobind, no doubt, claims that he was a great friend of Guru Har Rai too, but the only thing that he says of him is that "invested with the Guru's dignity Har-rayi remained one

year at Kiratpur. When in the year of the Hejirah 1055 (A.D. 1645) Najabet Khan, the son of Sharogh Mirza, by order of the Padshah Shahjehan, invaded with an army the land of the Raja Tara Chand, and made the Raja a prisoner, the Guru Har-rayi betook himself to Thapal, which town is situated in the district of the Raja Keramperkas, not far from Sirhind.”¹ This incident shows that Guru Har Rai was anxious to live a peaceful life and that to avoid complications he was even prepared to leave his place of abode for a shelter elsewhere. This is all that we get from the *Dabistan*, and though the Sikh records, particularly the *Suraj Parkash*, give us many details, most of these are useless for our purposes, whatever their value might be to a religious enthusiast.

However, out of this medley of myths and legends a few facts come out which show that, though according to the advice of his grandfather he maintained an army about 2,000 strong as a precautionary measure² and his court displayed “the pomp and circumstances of a semi-independent military chieftain,”³ he entirely gave up the policy of Guru Hargobind and devoted himself to peaceful activities. By this time the old *masands* were becoming largely corrupt and unreliable and the Guru is said to have hit upon a new expedient for carrying on the work of propaganda. We are told that a Bairagi monk named Bhagat Gir was converted to Sikhism together with his followers by Guru Har Rai. He was re-named Bhagat Bhagwan and was appointed “to preach Sikhism in the east, where he and his followers established about 360 *gaddis*, most of which are still extant.” Another devoted disciple of Guru Har Rai was appointed to preach Sikhism in the central districts of the Punjab.⁴ Thus were established the first two *Bakshishes* (bounties) or centres of missionary work and these proved so successful that three others were added, one by Guru Tegh Bahadur and the others by Guru Gobind Singh. “As the *masands* or missionaries

¹ *Dabistan*, Vol. II, p. 282.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 277.

³ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 685.

⁴ Teja Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

appointed by the earlier Gurus became more and more corrupt, this new order of preachers attained more prominence and was especially useful in spreading Sikhism in far distant and difficult places."

It has also been claimed on behalf of Guru Har Rai that silently he achieved much, inasmuch as some of the most powerful Sikh families "were set on their way to greatness by the fostering care of Har Rai." This claim is mainly based on the tradition that Phul, the progenitor of the Phulkian house (named after him), received blessings at the hands of Guru Har Rai, which proved the foundation of the future greatness of the family. The story runs that in one of his preaching missions the Guru came to the Malwa country, where two brothers named Kala and Karam Chand of the Marhaj tribe waited on him and complained that owing to the hostility of the Kaura tribe they were finding it difficult to secure a suitable place of habitation. The Guru tried to settle the matter amicably but when that failed he helped the Marhaj brothers to take forcible possession of a piece of land and settle there with their tribesmen. After this the Guru took up his residence at a place called Nathana and went on with his work of propaganda. There Kala visited the Guru off and on, and, on one occasion, took his two nephews, Sandali and Phul, with him. In the Guru's presence Phul was found putting his hand on his belly and, when the Guru enquired why he was doing this, Kala told him that Phul could not speak and whenever he felt hungry he would slap his belly. The Guru took compassion on him and said: "He shall become great, famous, and wealthy. The steeds of his descendants shall drink water as far as the Jamna; they shall have sovereignty for many generations, and be honoured in proportion as they serve the Guru." This may very well be a prophecy *ex-eventu* but, at the same time, it seems clear that the obscure Phul first came into some prominence under the patronage of Guru Har Rai and thus laid the foundation of the future greatness of his family. "Phul had six sons, from the eldest of whom, namely Tilok Singh, the Rajas of Nabha and Jind are descended. From Phul's second son, Ram

Singh, the Maharaja of Patiala is descended. These three are known as the Phul ke Raje, or Phulkian chiefs."¹

Nothing further of importance is known regarding the achievements of Guru Har Rai. He adhered strictly to the peaceful policy that he had adopted on his accession and some of his organisational and missionary efforts were undoubtedly praiseworthy and fruitful. On the whole, his pontificate was uneventful in so far as it lacked the romance of his grandfather's military adventures, but towards the end of his career, he unfortunately became involved in an incident which was pregnant with consequences, and which very much embittered his last days. In the war of succession among the sons of Shah Jahan Guru Har Rai is said to have sided with Dara Shukoh and, on the latter's defeat, had to face the wrath of Aurangzib. The Sikh records state that the Prince's life had once been saved by a medicine sent by the Guru² and we are also told that "Dara Shukoh had paid him visits of respect in the course of his general devotion to Sadhus."³ They had thus become great friends and when after his defeat at the hands of Aurangzib the Prince fled towards the Punjab and sought the Guru's assistance Har Rai naturally could not refuse. It was also in the fitness of things that, in a quarrel between Aurangzib and Dara, Har Rai would side with the latter, who represented the tradition of Akbar and whose chief fault in the eyes of the orthodox Muslims was his so-called apostasy. Be that as it may, the way in which the assistance was given by Guru Har Rai is not very clear. Some say that the Guru and the Prince had an interview on the right bank of the Beas. As he was being hotly pursued the Prince retreated hurriedly towards Lahore and the Guru sought to cover his retreat by opposing the passage of the river and impeding the progress of Aurangzib's army as much as possible.⁴ Others say that the Guru's help amounted merely to blessings,⁵ while

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 293—295.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 277—279. *Panth Prakash*, pp. 121, 122.

³ Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 311, 312.

⁴ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, pp. 302, 303.

⁵ Sarkar, *ibid.*, p. 311. See also Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 302.

Trumpp asserts that Guru Har Rai had actually joined Dara Shukoh with his Sikhs.¹ The *Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh*, however, puts the matter in a somewhat different light and as in point of time it is the nearest of the materials we have and as it records independent evidence we should give it the consideration that it rightly deserves. Sujan Rai writes: "When after his defeat Dara Shukoh came to Lahore he became very much afraid of his brother and made up his mind to flee to Multan and (then to) Kandahar. Of this he spoke to some of his confidants. Raja Rajrup said that he would go home to make better arrangements for the collection of troops and leaving his son and Vakeel at Lahore he went away. And after a few days the Vakeel and the son also fled. Guru Har Rai, who had come with a large army, left his camp with the plea that he was going to collect more troops for him."² Thus it appears that Guru Har Rai had actually joined Dara with his troops but when he found that the Prince's cause was hopeless and that he was himself thinking of giving up the fight, the Guru left him to his fate and came back to Kiratpur.

The Guru, however, had to suffer for this. As soon as Aurangzib was firmly seated on his throne he summoned Har Rai to his presence. The Guru somehow excused himself and sent his eldest son Ram Rai to represent him at the imperial court. The Sikh records state that Ram Rai, who was a very clever and, at the same time, a very ambitious young man, soon began to curry favour with the Emperor by acting in a manner that was hardly in line with the instructions that he had received from his father and which was highly derogatory to the dignity of the Guru's house. We are told that to please the Emperor he performed several miracles and made a name at Delhi as a thaumaturge. But the climax of his delinquency was reached when he did not hesitate even to distort a word in a verse of Guru Nanak in order to please the Emperor. The story runs that the Emperor assembled some Muslim divines and in that meeting Ram Rai

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxv.

² *Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh*, Zafar Hasan's edition, p. 513.

was asked to explain what Guru Nanak had meant by the following verse in the *Asa di Var* :

“The ashes of the Muhammadan fall into the potter’s clod ;
Vessels and bricks are fashioned from them ; they cry out
as they burn.”

Ram Rai saw the difficulty but he was not the man to be caught in so easily. He replied that the text had been needlessly corrupted by ignorant persons and the word Mussalman inserted in place of the word *beiman* or faithless.¹ It is said that the Emperor and the Muslim divines were all pleased with the reply but in averting the wrath of the Emperor Ram Rai brought upon himself the wrath of his father. When this news reached Guru Har Rai, he was beside himself with anger. The Sikhs regarded the Guru’s words as immutable and the *Granth Sahib* as the very embodiment of the Gurus, and consequently, in their eyes, this was an offence which appeared sacrilegious in the extreme. The result was that when, soon after, the Guru felt that his end was approaching, Ram Rai was superseded and his younger brother Har Krishan, who was barely six years old, was nominated as his successor by Guru Har Rai.

II. Guru Har Krishan

The Sikh chronicles state that Ram Rai was not the man to accept such a decision without a struggle. With the help of a few recalcitrant *masands* he declared himself Guru, disputed the succession and urged his superior claims before the Emperor. Guru Har Krishan was thereupon summoned to Delhi and after some hesitation and delay he arrived there. But, unfortunately, soon after his arrival at Delhi he had an attack of small-pox and expired in 1664. This is all that we know of the pontificate of Guru Har Krishan. But the whole thing appears to be involved in some obscurity and the way in which it is set forth in the Sikh records is hardly credible. In the first place, though Ram Rai is sometimes represented as having been his father’s envoy

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 308, 309. *Panth Prakash*, pp. 122, 123.

at the imperial court, he was in reality nothing but a hostage whom the Emperor kept as a security for the continued good conduct of Guru Har Rai. Secondly, it should not be forgotten that at the time of his father's death Ram Rai was a mere boy in his early teens and it is difficult to believe that he had done anything on his own initiative. Thirdly, we should remember that all that we know of Ram Rai we know mostly from the Sikh records, where, in all probability, the character of Ram Rai has been unjustly blackened. At the same time, it appears to us that if the Sikh accounts are carefully analysed, they provide us with, more or less, clear hints as to the truth of the matter. We are told that in this episode of Ram Rai's attempted seizure of the *gaddi* of his father the prime mover was a *masand* named Gurdas.¹ Several other *masands* also joined him and the object of the party appears to have been to enrich and aggrandise themselves, using Ram Rai as a tool for the purpose. The *masand* system had been slowly deteriorating and even during the days of Guru Hargobind difficulties seem to have arisen.² But the Guru was yet strong and the *masands* could not go far in their recalcitrance. They were no longer the honest, pious men whom Guru Arjan had appointed. "These collectors were at first chosen for their piety, integrity and high position and were, probably, honorary officers. The office, however, soon became hereditary in the families of the first incumbents, and gradually falling into unworthy hands became an instrument of jobbery and corruption."³ The death of Guru Har Rai at the early age of thirty, leaving behind two minor sons and nominating the younger of them to the succession, opened to these men the desired opportunity and some of them took up the cause of Ram Rai with a view to bring about a situation in which the dispute about the succession and the consequent weakening of the Guru's position would open to them an unrestrained field for malversation of the offerings. Others again remained loyal to Guru Har Krishan and the quarrel between the two groups resulted

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 316.

² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 73, foot-note.

in the summoning of the Guru to Delhi by the Emperor. Thus Aurangzib was given an opportunity of intervening in a matter which, by all means, should have been kept away from him and the whole incident showed up the Sikhs in a light which was hardly dignified.

On the other hand, it appears that the *masands* availed themselves fully of the opportunities that the situation presented to them. We are told: "The *masands* began to beat and plunder poor Sikhs, and threatened with the Guru's curse all who resented their conduct. Ram Rai's desire to collect large offerings was not fulfilled. The *masands* became proud and rebellious, and kept the greater part of the offerings for themselves. They treated Ram Rai as a nonentity, for they deemed that all the Sikhs were in their power, and that they could appoint to the Guruship whomsoever they pleased. Ram Rai found himself completely at their mercy, and was obliged to act according to their dictation."¹ In fact, Ram Rai's tender age precludes the possibility of his having acted as a principal at any stage in this affair and there can be little doubt that the whole thing was engineered by some of the *masands* solely for their own purposes. But in doing this they struck at the most vital spot of the Sikh organisation and the result was a progressive disintegration.

III. Guru Tegh Bahadur

This is very clearly illustrated by the pontificate of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the successor of Guru Har Krishan. Sikh tradition affirms that during Har Krishan's last days, at a moment when he had temporarily gained consciousness, "the Guru called for five paise and a coconut. He took them, and not being able to move his body, waved his hand three times in the air in token of circumambulating his successor, and said 'Baba Bakale,' that is, his successor would be found in the village of Bakala."² Now at Bakala resided the Sodhi Khattris, the kinsmen of the Guru's

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 316, 317.

² *Ibid.*, p. 329.

family, and when this news got abroad twenty-two of them, we are told, came forward and claimed the Guruship each on his own behalf and forcibly seized the offerings brought by the Sikhs for the Guru. But at Bakala also resided, with his mother and wife, Tegh Bahadur, the youngest son of Guru Hargobind. We are told that a Sikh named Makkhan Shah came with a present of 500 gold *muhars* for the Guru but found to his dismay that it was all uncertainty and confusion at Bakala and nobody could say who the true Guru was. It is said that thereupon Makkhan Shah resolved to make trial of the pretenders and became soon convinced that these twenty-two men claimed to be Gurus only with the object of plundering the Sikhs. He then visited Tegh Bahadur, who very soon satisfied Makkhan Shah that he was the real Guru. We are told that Makkhan Shah presented two gold *muhars* to Tegh Bahadur, but the latter straight away enquired of him about the five hundred gold *muhars* that he had brought for presentation to the Guru. Thereupon Makkhan Shah "ascended a house-top and, waving his flag, proclaimed from there, 'I have found the Guru, I have found the Guru.' On hearing this the Sikhs assembled from every quarter and with all due formalities and observances placed Tegh Bahadur, then in his forty-third year and the very image of Guru Nanak, on the Guru's throne."¹

Whatever might be the merit of this story regarding the discovery of the true successor of Guru Har Krishan, it leaves little room for doubt that Guru Tegh Bahadur succeeded to a position of very great difficulty. The Sodhi Khattris, notably Dhir Mal and Ram Rai, gave him no rest and some of the *masands*, who, as we have seen, had already been getting out of control, began to adopt an attitude of open hostility to the Guru. Of the several incidents narrated by Sikh writers with regard to the period of Guru Tegh Bahadur's life immediately following his accession to the *gaddi*, two appear to us to be remarkable and typical. It appears that Tegh Bahadur's recognition as the legitimate Guru proved too much for Dhir Mal, and, instigated by him, a *masand* named Sihan made an attempt on the Guru's

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 334.

life. He fired a bullet at the Guru and struck him, though fortunately the attack did not prove fatal.¹ Soon after this the Guru went to Amritsar. He bathed in the sacred tank but the ministrants of the Har Mandir shut its doors against him and he was not allowed to enter the holy precincts.² It is thus evident that the organisational cohesion which had been the glory of Sikhism was becoming a thing of the past and the movement was losing the strength that the Guru's undisputed leadership had given to it.

The Sodhis and the *masands* between them thus made the position too hot for the Guru and he slowly retired towards Kiratpur. But when he reached this place he found that, here too, the jealousy of the Sodhis plagued him and he retired farther into the hills. He bought a piece of land from the Raja of Kahlur and established himself in the village of Makhwal, which later developed into the well-known Sikh town of Anandpur. But the foundation of this retreat still further enraged the Sodhis and Dhir Mal forthwith began to conspire with Ram Rai to devise some means for the Guru's ruin. On the authority of Malcolm and Forster, Cunningham states that, as a result of the intrigues of Ram Rai at the imperial court, the Guru was summoned to Delhi "as a pretender to power and as a disturber of the peace" but through the intercession of the Raja of Jaipur, who promised to take the Guru with him in his approaching expedition to Assam, he was pardoned.³ Sikh tradition, however, is entirely different. We are told that when the Guru found that the Sodhis were not leaving him in peace even at Makhwal he thought it prudent to leave the stormy scene for a time and went out on travel with his wife and attendants. Guru Tegh Bahadur traversed the Malwa country, visited Kurukshetra and Hardwar and at last reached Patna *via* Prayag and Benares. There, at Patna, the Guru was visited by Mirza Raja Ram Singh, who was going out on an expedition against the Ahom King and at the Raja's request accompanied him to the front. On receipt

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 334

² *Ibid.*, p. 336. *Panth Prakash*, p. 128.

³ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

of the news of the birth of a son the Guru hurried back to Patna, where he remained for some time. He then returned to the Punjab and finally settled down at Anandpur.

But it is not easy to reconcile this story with contemporary history. Guru Gobind Singh was born early in 1666 and the expedition of Mirza Raja Ram Singh against the Ahom King was undertaken two years later.¹ Thus it cannot be true that Guru Tegh Bahadur left Raja Ram Singh on the front when a messenger from Patna brought to him the news of the birth of his son. The Guru's journey to Kamrup, however, is attested by the relics of his visit at Dhubri and other places² but it is difficult to say how the two incidents, *viz.*, the Guru's journey to the east and Raja Ram Singh's expedition to Assam got mixed up.

Be that as it may, it seems that after his return to Patna the Guru stayed on at that place for several years till at last his thoughts again turned towards the Punjab. Guru Tegh Bahadur then started for his native land alone, leaving instructions to his family to join him there as soon as he would send for them, apparently because he was dubious as regards the nature of the reception he was likely to get there. It seems, however, that it was not long before the Guru sent for his family and finally settled down at Makhawal.

We now enter upon the more exciting and the more controversial part of Guru Tegh Bahadur's career. The Sikh records state that after his return to Makhawal the Guru busied himself in propagating the faith and imparting instruction to his followers but he was not allowed to remain long in peace. Aurangzib's religious policy which aimed at the establishment of

¹ Gurbux Singh has suggested a way out of the difficulty. The expedition against Chittagong was carried on in the winter of 1665-66, which corresponds very well with the date of birth of Guru Gobind Singh. The only Rajput of note in the expedition was Raja Subal Singh Sesodia, a commander of 1500. Gurbux Singh evidently implies that the Guru possibly had accompanied this expedition. (*Dacca Review*, 1915, p. 229, foot-note).

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 358, 360.

an orthodox Sunni state had by now raised a whirlwind throughout the country and it was idle to expect that a man of the position and spiritual eminence of Guru Tegh Bahadur could remain unaffected. The strict Muslim had ever grumbled at the policy inaugurated by Akbar, and his party gradually gained in strength till the whole thing came to a head in the war of succession among the sons of Shah Jahan. Dara, as is well known, represented the traditions of the Empire, whereas Aurangzib stood for ultra-theological principles. Necessarily, on the accession of Aurangzib the entire policy of the Empire was reversed and a new era commenced. The following measures that were adopted by Aurangzib during the first ten years of his reign clearly show the extent to which the religion of the Hindus suffered at the hands of the new Emperor. Even in 1644, when Aurangzib was the Viceroy of Gujrat, he had shown his zeal for Islam by desecrating the temple of Chintaman at Ahmedabad and also by the deliberate suppression of various other temples. With his accession to the throne the policy of repression and discrimination became more general. Early in his reign the local officials of Orissa were called upon "to pull down all temples, including even clay huts, built during the last ten or twelve years, and to allow no old temples to be repaired."¹ In 1669 an order was passed "to demolish all schools and temples of the infidels and to put down their religious practices and teaching."² The magnificent and time-honoured temples of Somnath, Mathura and Benares were demolished and the *Jesiyah* reimposed. Customs duty on Mussalmans was abolished, rewards were given to converts, the Hindus were gradually excluded from public offices, their religious fairs were put down and the celebrations of the Dewali and Holi were greatly controlled and circumscribed. "A systematic plan was followed for carrying out the policy of iconoclasm. Officers were appointed in all the subdivisions and cities of the Empire.....to enforce the regulations of Islam, such as the suppression of the use of wine and bhang, and of gambling. The destruction of Hindu places of worship

¹ Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 265.

² *Ibid.*

was one of their chief duties, and so large was the number of officers employed in the task that a 'Director-General' had to be placed over them to guide their activity."¹ The Sikhs, who were also infidels, could not expect better treatment than the Hindus and we are told that "Aurangzib ordered the temples of the Sikhs to be destroyed and the Guru's agents (masands) for collecting the tithes and presents of the faithful to be expelled from the cities."² Such was the state of affairs when Tegh Bahadur returned to the Punjab and it was not long before he was caught in its toils.

The Sikh records state that Sher Afghan Khan, the Emperor's Viceroy in Kashmir, "set about converting the Kashmiris by the sword and massacred those who persevered in their adherence to the faith of their forefathers." We are told that later on this extreme policy was to some extent relaxed but still the situation was desperate enough and the Kashmiri Brahmans, in despair, sought the advice and assistance of Guru Tegh Bahadur. When the Kashmiri Brahmans apprised him of their tale of woe the Guru sat in deep meditation for some time and then advised them to go over to Delhi and make the following representation to the Emperor: "Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, is now seated on the throne of the great Guru Nanak, who is protector of faith and religion. First make him a Mussalman and then all the people, including ourselves, will of our own accord adopt the faith." They did as they were told and as a result the Emperor sent a messenger to Makhawal to summon the Guru. Tegh Bahadur wrote in reply that he would himself go to Delhi after the rainy season and early in June he started for his destination. In the meantime Aurangzib had sent two messengers to Makhawal to hasten the Guru's departure but when they arrived the latter was already gone. The messengers hurried to Amritsar and there, too, the Guru was not to be found. They informed the Emperor of what they regarded as the Guru's flight, and Aurangzib despatched orders all over the

¹ Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 267.

² Khafi Khan (II, 652) as quoted in Sarkar, *ibid.*, p. 212.

Empire to search for and arrest the Guru, who was soon captured. The Guru is said to have given a large gold ring to a shepherd boy and asked him to pledge it and bring two rupees' worth of sweets. It is stated that there was absolutely no necessity to part with the ring as the Guru had enough money with him. However, the boy was arrested on suspicion by a police officer, who, in course of his enquiries, came to Tegh Bahadur. The latter readily disclosed his identity and was at once arrested.¹ The Guru was then taken over to Delhi and kept imprisoned in the local jail for some time. The Sikh records give many details as to what followed but the main points that emerge are that the Guru was asked to choose between Islam and death and, when Tegh Bahadur stoutly refused to forsake his own religion and embrace Islam, he was asked to work a miracle and save himself. The Guru's reply was that "a miracle was the wrath of God" and that the Emperor might do with him as he pleased. When all efforts to make him embrace Islam failed the Emperor ordered the Guru's execution and he was beheaded in 1675.

In the *Bachitra Natak* Guru Gobind Singh writes:

"After him (Har Krishan) came Tegh Bahadur,
Who protected the frontal marks and sacrificial threads of the
Hindus
And displayed great bravery in the Kal Age.
When he put an end to his life for the sake of holy men,
He gave his head but uttered not a groan.
He suffered martyrdom for the sake of his religion ;
He gave his head but swerved not from his determination.
God's people would be ashamed
To perform the tricks of mountebanks and cheats."²

It will be seen that here we have a confirmation of the main points of importance that we get in the Sikh chronicles, *viz.*, that Guru Tegh Bahadur assisted the Hindus against the religious persecution of Aurangzib and that he had rejected alike the offers of saving his life by embracing Islam or by working a miracle. The Guru's was thus a self-sought martyrdom, a willing sacrifice for religion. Knowing fully well the might of the Emperor and

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 369-377.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 295.

his own comparative helplessness he yet took up the cause of the persecuted Hindus. His offence, in the Emperor's eyes, was thus exceedingly serious and it is no wonder that he met his death in execution.

But it has been suggested that there was something besides and that the causes of the Guru's execution were not wholly religious. It has been said that Tegh Bahadur was not merely a spiritual leader but a soldier as well and Sarkar goes so far as to assert that he actually fought in the ranks of the Mughal army with a number of followers in connection with Raja Ram Singh's expedition against the Ahom King.¹ Cunningham says: "His repeated injunction that his disciples should obey the bearer of his arrows, show more of the kingly than the priestly spirit."² The implication appears to be that Guru Tegh Bahadur had been some sort of a political revolutionary. This view of the matter, we think, arises primarily from what Golam Hussein writes in the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkharin*. He says: "This man (Tegh Bahadur) finding himself at the head of so many thousands of people, became aspiring; and he united his concerns with one Hafyz-aadeem, a Mahomedan fakir..... These two men no sooner saw themselves followed by multitudes, implicitly addicted to their chief's will, than forsaking every honest calling, they fell to subsisting by plunder and rapine, laying waste the whole province of Pendjab."³ Accepting the above statement Cunningham remarks: "Tegh Bahadur followed the example of his father with unequal footsteps, and that, choosing for his haunts the wastes between Hansi and the Sutlej he subsisted himself and his disciples by plunder, in a way, indeed, that rendered him not unpopular with the peasantry."⁴ We are told that this is largely corroborated by some Sikh *Sakhis*⁵ and, on the strength of these, Pincott says: "It is certain that Tegh Bahadur spent

¹ Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 312.

² Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³ English translation (R. Cambay & Co.), p. 85.

⁴ Cunningham, *ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵ Their title is: *The Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh*, Translated from the Original *Gurumukhi* by Sardar Attar Singh of Bhadour.

his life in violent antagonism to the Muslim rulers of the country.”¹ In the same strain Trumpp writes: “The Guru appears by no means as a humble spiritual instructor, but riding at the front of well-armed disciples, who, if not willingly provided, levied contributions on the Zamindars and the inhabitants of the villages through which they passed, and made predatory incursions on the Muhammadan population. The Guru had not only a strong band of Sikhs with him, but he engaged also some rural clans to enter his service, promising them, that he would pay them handsomely and put them in the way of obtaining booty.” He goes on to say that one of the *Sakhis* show that “the Muhammadan soldiers were at the heels of the Guru, trying to capture him” and from another it can be gathered that it was dangerous to receive the Guru as he was outlawed at that time. Trumpp’s conclusion is that “the Muhammadan reports, which ascribe his capture and execution to political reasons, deserve therefore full credit, the Sikh tradition itself confirming by these *Sakhis* the charges brought against him.”²

It is strange that Trumpp should write about this matter with so much of confidence because he makes no secret of the fact that he was doubtful as to whether the above-mentioned *Sakhis* referred to Guru Tegh Bahadur at all. The more likely probability is that these refer to Tegh Bahadur’s son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, and thus it seems that there is no substance in the contention that Sikh tradition also supports the statements of the *Siya*. On the contrary we are definitely told

¹ Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 593.

² Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxix. In a foot-note Trumpp says: “In these *Sakhis* no distinct line is drawn between the wanderings of Guru Tegh Bahadur and those of Guru Gobind Singh, so that it remains uncertain, where the first end and where the second commence.” From the internal evidence contained in *Sakhi* 41 where there is direct reference to *Pahul* and the naming of a man as Ghoongna Singh it appears to us clear that it is concerned with Guru Gobind Singh and some of the immediately earlier ones are also very probably of the same character. Thus it is clear that the argument based on these *Sakhis* as to the predatory habits of Guru Tegh Bahadur has no legs to stand upon, as practically all the *Sakhis* on which Pincott and Trumpp rely come after *Sakhi* 41 and undoubtedly refer to Guru Gobind Singh.

that Tegn Bahadur was naturally of a peaceful disposition, that he had lived the life of a recluse prior to his nomination to the Guruship and that he preferred to be called Degh Bahadur instead of Tegn Bahadur.¹ His spirit of forbearance and his love of peace are clearly brought out in the manner in which he sought to meet the intrigues of his kinsmen and those of the *masands* and his writings unmistakably testify to the saintliness of his character. In the face of all these we find it difficult to accept the statements of a writer, who wrote more than hundred years after the event, and whose story that the Guru was executed as a disturber of the public peace and as an aspirant to power finds no corroboration elsewhere. As Macauliffe says: "...the circumstances related by the Muhammadan writer are utterly incompatible with the whole tenor of Guru Tegn Bahadur's life and writings, and cannot be accepted as even an approach to history."²

We may take it therefore that the Guru fell a victim to religious bigotry and it is understandable why later Muhammadan writers sought to cloud the issue by giving it a political colour. Be that as it may, the Guru's execution undoubtedly strengthened the resistance against the religious policy of Aurangzib and at the same time, prepared the way for the final stage in the evolution of Sikhism. "In his death the Guru surpassed anything that he had done in life. He was known throughout Upper India, was highly revered by Rajput Princes, and was actually worshipped by the peasantry of the Punjab. His execution was universally regarded by the Hindus as a sacrifice for their faith. The whole Punjab began to burn with indignation and revenge."

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 332. *Tegn* means a sword, whereas *deg* means a kitchen.

² *Ibid.*, p. 392.

Golam Hussein states that under the orders of the Emperor the Governor of Lahore seized both the Guru and the Muhammadan fakir, and while the latter was deported to Afghanistan, the former was confined in the fort of Gwalior. After some time "there came an order to the Governor of Gwalior to put Tygh-Bahadur to death, to cut his body into four quarters and to hang them at the four gates of the fortress, a sentence which was literally executed." It will be seen that this also goes against the unanimous Sikh tradition that the Guru was executed at Delhi, where the Sishganj Gurdwara has been long standing to commemorate the event.

CHAPTER III

GURU GOBIND SINGH—EARLY ADVENTURES

I. The situation at the death of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Tegh Bahadur left the Sikhs in a precarious position. He had, no doubt, invested his only son Gobind Rai with the insignia of Guruship just before his departure for Delhi, but the new Guru was a boy of nine and the situation in which he was placed was one of unprecedented difficulties. Dissensions within and dangers from without threatened Sikhism alike and it seemed that the infant community had reached a pass from which there was no deliverance. The unique position of the Guru in Sikhism constituted the main source of its strength and distinctiveness and it was primarily on the nucleus supplied by the predominant personality of the Guru that the Sikh organisation had been built up. But ever since the days of Guru Hargobind various circumstances conjointly led to a definite weakening of the Guru's position and prestige, and as the whole organisation moved with the Guru as its pivot, the weakening of the Guru's position could not but lead to wholesale disorganisation and chaos. The weakness of the Guru inevitably strengthened the hands of the *masands* and dissensions at the capital soon raised them up as a great counterpoise to the Guru's authority. They began openly to declare that they could make and unmake Gurus and by their dishonesty and greed were daily bringing the whole movement into disrepute.

The very moment the Guruship acquired temporal adjuncts and became hereditary in a particular family, internal dissensions commenced and rival sects came into existence. The earliest instance of dissent in the history of Sikhism was that of Sri Chand and the *Udasis* but here the differences arose on doctrinal grounds and no temporal issues were involved. It does not also appear that it created any bitterness, for we find that the Sikhs and

the *Udasis* lived on the friendliest of terms. The more important of the other schismatic sects, *viz.*, the Minas and the Ram Rayees, owe their origin to contests for the Guruship, which left a trail of unending bitterness. The Sikh legends say that when Guru Amar Das promised to his daughter, Bibi Bhani, that the Guruship would remain hereditary in her line, he warned her that "she had damned the clear flowing stream of the Guruship, and consequently great trouble and annoyance shall result."¹ This prophecy was only too literally fulfilled as is clearly shown by the troubles that were caused by the intrigues of Prithia, Dhir Mal and Ram Rai. In one sense the central fact of Guru Arjan's life was the enmity of his brother Prithia, who allied himself with Sulahi Khan, a local revenue officer, complained to the chaudhris of Amritsar, entered into a conspiracy with Chandu, and even approached the Emperor. He was never inactive and gave Guru Arjan no rest. After his death, his son Mihrban continued the intrigues and later on allied himself with the son of Chandu and the Nazim of Lahore. The Guru was thus placed in a position of constant insecurity and, as Narang suggests, Hargobind's own dangerous situation, arising out of the plots of his cousin, might have been one of the most potent reasons that led him to grasp the sword.² Similarly, Ram Rai's intrigues against his brother opened to the Emperor the opportunity of interfering in the most vital matter of succession. His residence at Delhi and his ready access to the Emperor gave him the desired opportunity and the Sikh records are unanimous in ascribing all the earlier troubles of Tegh Bahadur primarily to the machinations of Ram Rai at the imperial court. Besides, there were Dhir Mal and the Sodhis and the net result of the intrigues of all these was to drive the Guru into a desperate position and precipitate a conflict between the state and Sikhism.

The first collision occurred, as we have seen, during the days of Guru Hargobind, and, in its immediate effects, it compelled a more definite departure from the ideals that guided the early Sikh Gurus. The exigencies of his situation led Hargobind

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 144.

² Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

to admit certain elements into the fold of Sikhism and let loose certain latent forces, which it became increasingly difficult to reconcile with the ideals of a religious system and which made a reversion to the earlier path of Sikh history impossible. And soon events happened which provided additional reasons for perpetuating the newer adjuncts in a more accentuated form. The traditional policy of the Mughal Empire was suddenly reversed. By his wanton persecution and his deliberate suppression of the religion of the 'infidels' Aurangzib raised a whirlwind throughout the Empire and the Sikhs could not remain unaffected. Their agents were driven out from the cities, their temples were ordered to be demolished and their holy places desecrated. The climax came when their Guru, whose only fault in their eyes was his staunch adherence to his own faith, was publicly executed. Sikhism was thus threatened with extinction, root and branch, and though it has been said that the Sikhs would have been left alone if they reverted to their earlier path and relapsed into a purely religious community of quietists,¹ it is clear that the past history of Sikhism and the character of its votaries made that impossible and there remained no other method of self-defence except the aid of arms.

Moreover, as has been shown elsewhere,² the Sikhs had, by no means, got rid of their caste and tribal predilections. Their solidarity was often cut through by matrimonial alliances outside the community and tribal consciousness often gained the better of the injunctions of Sikhism. Still there were many things in Sikhism that were noble and great and of these none so magnificent as the selfless devotion to the Guru and the intense feeling of brotherhood. It has been shown elsewhere as to what extent a Sikh could go for his Guru or a brother Sikh and the martial instinct inherent in the Jat only required discipline and direction to achieve wonders. The problem, therefore, was that in course of its development Sikhism had acquired certain adjuncts which it could neither completely assimilate nor entirely discard. A

¹ *Hakikat*, English translation by I. Banerjee, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, March, 1942.

² *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. I, Appendix A.

purely religious movement had gradually acquired certain accretions which were distinctly of a socio-political character. External dangers and the character of the Sikhs themselves demanded further development. On the other hand, there was hopeless disintegration within and, side by side, the wherewithal to build a new unity. The future of Sikhism, therefore, depended on how these contradictory forces were synthesised under the banner of a common ideal and how uniformity was secured within the system itself in order to better assure the cohesion of the secular movement that was to be based upon it.

II. Retirement to Nahan and the battle of Bhangani

The immediate problem for the new Guru, however, was to save himself from the wrath of the Emperor. It was too much to expect that Aurangzib's hostility would cease with the death of Tegh Bahadur and the Sikh records tell us that although a mere boy, the Guru soon revived the policy of his grandfather. He soon collected an army and constructed a big drum to complete his equipment. And like his grandfather Hargobind he caused it to be publicly known that he would be grateful to all who brought him arms and horses and it is said that his appeal met with a ready response. It thus appears that the policy of armed resistance, which had been almost wholly abandoned by the successors of Guru Hargobind, again became predominant under Guru Gobind Singh. But these measures for self-defence were evidently considered inadequate and the Guru soon retired farther into the hills and took up his residence at Paunta, situated in the territories of the Raja of Nahan.

In the *Bachitra Natak* the Guru informs us that when he obtained sovereignty he promoted religion to the best of his ability. But afterwards he left that country and proceeded to Paunta, where he enjoyed himself on the bank of the Kalindri (Jumna) in amusements of various kinds, particularly in hunting various sorts of game in the forest. But Fateh Shah, the Raja, became angry with him and came to blows with him without any reason.¹ This is all that the Guru tells us of his

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, VIII, 1-3.

retirement to Nahan and of the conflict with Fateh Shah, known as the battle of Bhangani.

Evidently there are gaps in this scrappy account and we would forthwith proceed to fill them in with the aid of the more detailed Sikh records. These latter almost unanimously tell us that after his father's death the Guru continued to stay at Makhawal. He soon collected an army and busily strengthened his resources when suddenly quarrel broke out with Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur. We are told that Raja Bhim Chand became very eager to dispossess the Guru of some valuable presents from his disciples, a trained elephant and a magnificent tent among others. Their relation became more and more strained and at last both resolved to appeal to arms. At this crisis, an invitation came from the Raja of Nahan, and the Sikh party opposed to war, mostly composed of *masands*, who had succeeded in convincing the Guru's mother and grandmother of the inexpediency of an immediate war with Bhim Chand, persuaded the Guru to accept the invitation and leave Makhawal alone for some time.

But it appears that the root of the matter went even deeper. The Guru was becoming a menace to the integrity of Bhim Chand's dominions. The beating of a drum was regarded as a symbol of sovereignty in those days. The Guru, it is stated, had constructed a big drum and beat it regularly at Makhawal. The Guru's followers sometimes ravaged the villages by force. Therefore it is no wonder that Bhim Chand became somewhat nervous and consulted some of his brother chieftains, Raja Kripal of Katoch among others, as to the course he should pursue. It was decided that the question should be finally settled as soon as the impending marriage of Bhim Chand's son with the daughter of Fateh Shah of Srinagar was over and Fateh Shah himself had been consulted about it. In the meantime the Guru had retired to Paunta and become a great friend of Fateh Shah by amicably settling the disputes between him and the Raja of Nahan. The Guru brought the two Rajas in open court and caused them to embrace each other and promise eternal friendship. Naturally when the wedding of Fateh Shah's daughter

was celebrated soon after, the Guru sent rich presents through his Dewan, Nand Chand. But difficulties were immediately raised by Bhim Chand about the acceptance of the Guru's presents and he openly threatened his new relation that he would cut off all connections with him if he accepted presents from his avowed enemy. Many of the Rajas had assembled at Srinagar on that occasion and they also seem to have supported Bhim Chand in his resolution. The social obligations to a daughter's father-in-law compelled Fateh Shah to cast all other considerations to the wind and when it was decided that the Guru should be immediately attacked, Fateh Shah was even constrained to take the lead of the allied army.

But there are obvious difficulties in the way of our accepting this story as history. According to this version, the Guru's stay in Nahan territory must have been nominal, for he left Makhwal when the marriage of Bhim Chand's son with the daughter of Fateh Shah was impending and he came back immediately after the battle of Bhangani, which was fought as soon as the wedding ceremony was over. The Sikh writers state that, when the Guru had definitely refused to hand over the trained elephant to Bhim Chand, the latter asked for a temporary loan of the animal on the occasion of his son's marriage. Thus it would appear that even when Bhim Chand was making preparations to proceed to Srinagar to celebrate his son's wedding the Guru was still at Makhwal. From the Guru's own account as well as from the other Sikh records we learn that he returned to Kahlur territory immediately after the battle of Bhangani. Therefore the Guru must have stayed in Nahan territory for a very short time. But the relics of the Guru's fort at Paunta and Nahan tradition leave no room for doubt that the Guru's stay there was somewhat prolonged. The *Sirmur Gazetteer* states that Guru Gobind Singh lived at Paunta for about five years¹ and the Guru's own statement seems to

¹ *Sirmur Gazetteer*, p. 51. It is, however, stated on p. 112 that the Guru resided at Paunta for about 3 years. At any rate, the Guru's stay must have been rather protracted.

indicate that he had not remained long at Makhawal after his father's death.

Indeed, it seems almost certain that there has been a confusion in the later Sikh records and possibly their ignorance of the real causes of the battle of Bhangani led them to make two things appear as cause and effect, which originally had no connection. The main cause of the Guru's retirement to Nahan might have been, as the Sikh records suggest, the enmity of Bhim Chand of Bilaspur, but that the same ill-will of Bhim Chand was solely responsible for bringing about the battle of Bhangani almost immediately afterwards, is more than what we can accept. We have already pointed out that this would make the Guru's stay in Nahan purely nominal, while we have very good reasons to believe that he made a somewhat protracted stay at Paunta. Moreover, it is very important to notice that the Guru himself informs us that immediately after the battle of Bhangani he went to Kahlur (Bilaspur) and there established the village of Anandpur.¹ Taken literally, the Guru's words mean that it was only after the battle of Bhangani that Anandpur was established as his headquarters. If we regard Makhawal and Anandpur as identical the Guru's statement may not be literally true but it clearly indicates that the Guru's earlier stay at Anandpur-Makhawal was purely nominal and that it was made the real centre of his activities after the battle of Bhangani.

It seems that inspite of its apparent confusion in some respects Forster's statement is the nearest approach to the truth of the matter. He says: "The intelligence of his father's death and dread of a like fate had induced him to fly from Patna whence he retired after a series of various adventures into the territory of Srinagnagpur" and "afterwards proceeded with his adherents to the Punjab, where he was hospitably received by a marauding Hindu chief of that quarter, who gave him the

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, VIII, 36. "Anandpur is situated close to Makhawal. The first name was given by Gobind to his own particular residence at Makhawal, as distinguished from the abode of his father." Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

dependencies of Mackoval."¹ It is, no doubt, evident that the Guru could not have fled in the first instance from Patna because he himself informs us that he had been brought to the Punjab before his father's death, but the rest of Forster's statement agrees, on the whole, very well with what we would get from a literal interpretation of the Guru's own words that it was only after the battle of Bhangani that he went to Kahlur and established the village of Anandpur. At the time of his father's death the Guru was a mere boy and as yet his resources were slender and scanty. The mighty Mughal Government had declared itself the open enemy of his faith and the first result of that open breach had been the execution of his father. It is also very probable that the chief in whose territories the Guru resided also raised difficulties about his continuance there as it might involve him in troubles with the Mughal Government and the Guru thought it better to leave the place and retire farther into the hills. There he lived in seclusion for several years but suddenly quarrel broke out with Fateh Shah of Srinagar. The Guru won the battle that followed but still perhaps he did not consider it convenient to remain there any longer. In the meantime circumstances had changed in Kahlur. Bhim Chand was now meditating rebellion against the Mughal Government or had actually rebelled. At this crisis he was only too glad to welcome the Guru back to his territories. The Guru, in his turn, readily consented and coming to Kahlur founded the village of Anandpur, which henceforward became the centre of his activities.

What has been said above seems most in accordance with the probabilities of the case. At any rate, the evidence of the *Bachitra Natak*, practically the only reliable authority on the point, supports this view more than any other. It is, no doubt, unsafe to place too much reliance on negative evidence but it is significant that the Guru nowhere mentions Bhim Chand in connection with the battle of Bhangani and it seems improbable that he would so readily return to Kahlur if, as the Sikh writers

¹ Forster, *Travels*, p. 261.

suggest, the Guru's original quarrel with Bhim Chand was the main or in fact the only reason that brought him into collision with Fateh Shah. Moreover, the story that the Guru passed the first twenty years of his pontificate in seclusion in the hills is, no doubt, in some respects, contrary to all evidence; but it seems to us that the story of this early retirement was mixed up with the Guru's temporary obscurity in the hills on the eve of his convening the assembly at Keshgarh and became the foundation of the myth.

We would now proceed direct to the battle of Bhangani. The Guru's own account does not help us much in understanding the causes of the conflict. As we have seen, he merely says that Fateh Shah came to blows with him without any reason. It has also been pointed out that the reason, which the various other Sikh records suggest, is hardly acceptable. We have thus practically no direct evidence to work upon. However, from the Guru's description of the battle it appears that some of the Hill chiefs had made an alliance against him. The chiefs of Dadhwar and Jaswal,¹ Gaji Chand of Chandel,² and Gopal³ and Hari Chand⁴ fought on the side of Fateh Shah. The later Sikh records⁵ add the names of some other chiefs who joined Fateh Shah or at least participated in the consultations that preceded the battle. Thus it seems that, for some reason or other, the Guru had seriously alarmed the Hill chieftains. Cunningham says that the Guru "seems to have endeavoured to mix himself up with the affairs of the half-independent chiefs, and to obtain a commanding influence over them, so as by degrees to establish a virtual principality amid mountain fastnesses to serve as the basis of his operations against the Mughal Government."⁶ Though it is doubtful whether the views of the Guru had as yet advanced to this extent, there are indications in the Sikh

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, VIII, 20.

² *Ibid.*, VIII, 21.

³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII, 12, 13, 15, 21, 26, 29, 33.

⁵ *Gur Bilas*, VI, 96, 156. *Panth Prakas*, XXXIII, 16.

⁶ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

records that he wanted to mix himself up with the affairs of the Hill chieftains. But Guru Gobind's policy in the hills proved a conspicuous failure. The Kangra Hills are that portion of the Punjab which is most essentially Hindu. It has been said that "one is almost tempted to believe that the type of Hindu society still found in this tract preserves an even more archaic organisation than anything described by Manu."¹ There had never been any long sustained Muslim domination and the chiefs who ruled over "the most ancient principalities of northern India" were naturally resentful of any external influence. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the Hill chiefs would look upon the Guru as an upstart. He represented a faith which inculcated liberal ideas and most of his followers were Jats, whom the Rajputs looked down upon as persons of inferior breed. Thus political privilege, social exclusiveness and tribal pride—all combined to induce the Hill chiefs to present a united front against the Guru. This explains why the Guru never succeeded in maintaining a lasting alliance with the Hill chiefs and why Sikhism never made any headway in the hills.

But the immediate cause of the Guru's quarrel with Fatch Shah must have been more direct. The Guru's army was, as yet, something of a rabble and a Pathan commander in the Guru's army is said to have observed: "The Guru's main dependence is on us. The rest of his army is a miscellaneous rabble who have never seen war, and will run away when they hear the first shot fired." This was certainly a misrepresentation of the Guru's resources as was finally demonstrated in the field of Bhangani but that some at least had joined the Guru merely for the sake of booty and did not stand by him when the crisis came is clearly proved by the Guru's own statement that after the establishment of Anandpur he drove out all those who had not joined in the battle.² Even after this, desertion at critical moments were, by no means, rare³ and it thus appears that there was a party in the Guru's camp who cared little for

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 30.

² *Bachitra Natak*, VIII, 37, 38.

³ *Ibid.*, X, 1; XIII, 2.

his cause and who had joined him merely for the sake of personal profit. Perhaps these were the people who were primarily responsible for those repeated outrages on the subjects of the Hill chiefs, of which we get many indications in the Sikh records.¹ These generally took the form of taking supplies forcibly from the villagers and explain, to a large extent, the irritation and nervousness of the Hill chieftains and their subjects. Indeed, the marauding instinct was characteristic of the Jats, who formed the bulk of the Guru's followers and whom, it seems, the influence of Sikhism never completely chastened. Here we possibly get the clue to one of the reasons that might have inspired the combination against the Guru. And Fateh Shah, particularly, had perhaps a special cause of grievance. The Sikh records state that Medini Prakas of Nahan and Fateh Shah of Srinagar had been constantly engaged in border warfare but after his retirement to Paunta the Guru had brought the two chiefs together and amicably settled their disputes. But it seems that the settlement did not prove lasting and, as the Guru was a great friend of the Nahan chief and had taken up his abode in his territories,³ it may not be improbable that he somehow became involved in the traditional boundary disputes between the two States.

But however uncertain our position might be with regard to the causes of the quarrel, so far as the battle itself is concerned we stand on much surer ground. The Guru's own description might be animated and more calculated to inflame the courage of his followers than to convey correct information of actual

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, IX, 24. Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 49, 50.

² Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 18.

³ The Guru established his residence at Paunta, which is situated on the banks of the Jumna, 26 miles from Nahan. There is a *Gurdwara* here and the ruins of the fort built by the Guru still exist. Some say that the name 'Paunta' is derived from the fact that the Guru first halted (fixed his *paw-feet*) here after his departure from Makhwal. The *Sirmur Gazetteer*, however, states that the Guru first halted at Toka, where the spot is marked by a *Gurdwara*, 'though it only consists of a small platform near a wall.' Thence he was brought to Nahan by the Raja and afterwards proceeded to Paunta. (*Sirmur Gazetteer*, pp. 15, 51. Macauliffe, *ibid.*, pp. 16, 17. *Gur Bilas*, VI, 19-21).

events,¹ but the main facts appear clearly enough. The opposing forces met on the field of Bhangani which stand about 6 miles distant from Paunta on the plain between the Jumna and the Giri, not far from the city of Rajpura on the Mans-suri (Mussoorie) road.² The battle commenced with great vehemence and immediately the five sons of Bibi Viro,³ the only daughter of Guru Hargobind, organised an attack which was nobly backed up by the Brahman Dayaram, Dewan Chand, and the two Kripals, one, the Guru's uncle and the other, an *U'dasi Mahant*. The brunt of the attack seems to have fallen, in the first instance, on those Pathan mercenaries who had been in the Guru's pay but had mutinied and joined the Hill chiefs just on the eve of the battle. We are told that of their four leaders, Hayat Khan, Najabet Khan, Bhikhan Khan and Kale Khan, the last alone remained true to the Guru "with the troops of one hundred men of which he had been originally in command."⁴ It appears that early in the battle Hayat Khan was killed by the *Mahant* Kripal,⁵ but the others fought on and the action continued with great determination on both sides. After some time Raja Gopal and Hari Chand⁶ became prominent in attack and for some time

¹ Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 54.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 29. *Gur Bilas*, VI, 250, 251.

The *Sirmur Gazetteer* states (p. 15) that both Hari Chand and Fateh Shah fell in the battle. "The Ranis of both the leaders became *sati* and their eight tombs are still shown at Bhangani. The Sikh records, however, tell us that Fateh Shah had fled when he found his cause hopeless. A *gurdwara* still commemorates the Guru's victory."

³ These were Sangu Shah, Jit Mal, Gopal Chand, Gangaram and Maheri Chand. The Guru is said to have called Sangu Shah by the name of Sri Shah because of his great military skill. Macauliffe (*ibid.*, p. 43) says that after his glorious death on the field of Bhangani the Guru changed his name to Shah Sangram (Lord of Battle). See also *Gur Bilas*, VI, 247.

⁴ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, pp. 30-33. The Guru, however, does not say anything about Kale Khan.

⁵ *Bachitra Natak*, VIII, 7.

⁶ Possibly Gopal is the same Raja Gopal of Guler who is the hero of the XIth section of the *Bachitra Natak*. The *Gur Bilas* (VI, 156) and the *Panth Prakas* (XXIII, 16) definitely connect the two. The later Sikh records state unanimously that Hari Chand was the Raja of Nalgarh (Handur) though in the Guru's account there appears nothing that would justify us in connecting him with Nalgarh. But that cannot mean much

the Guru's prospects looked very dark.¹ At this crisis Jit Mal came to the rescue of his side. With his spear he struck Hari Chand who fell down senseless and had to be carried off the field.² This seems to have immediately relieved the pressure and the Guru's party again became aggressive. The Pathan leaders maintained a determined resistance but the Rajas of Jaswar and Dadhwar, who had hitherto been fighting with zeal, left the field with all their troops and Gaji Chand of Chandel stood exhausted and perplexed.³ A general rout of the allies was about to commence but at this juncture Hari Chand rose from his swoon and became immediately alive to the duties of a leader.⁴ The allies again rallied and the last phase of the battle commenced. A great fight began between Sri Shah on the one hand and Najabet Khan on the other, and many soldiers on both sides were killed. After some time both the leaders fell⁵ and the Guru, who had as yet taken no actual part in the

because the Guru's account is always scrappy and in some places hardly intelligible without the assistance of the more detailed Sikh records. The Guru generally describes him as the simple Hari Chand without the appellation of Raja and the only place where he hints that Hari Chand is a chief is verse 33, where he is called "*Karor Ruyan*." Macauliffe translates "*Karor Ruyan*" as "the chief of Karor" (Vol. V, p. 44) but contradictorily makes Hari Chand "the chief of Handur" in his general biography of the Guru (Vol. V, p. 41). But as we nowhere find it mentioned that a chief of Karor had anything to do with Guru Gobind Singh, we think that Bhai Bishen Singh Gyani is right in interpreting "*karor*" as "the owner of a crore", or a multi-millionaire. (Annotated edition of the *Bachitra Natak*, p. 211). Hari Chand then was a rich and powerful chief but there are difficulties in the way of our accepting the statement that he was the Raja of Handur. The *Nalgarh Gazetteer* states that an able and just ruler named Dharm Chand ruled in Nalgarh for no less than 83 years, from 1618 to 1701, and was succeeded by his eldest son Himmat Chand (*Simla Hill States Gazetteer, Nalgarh*, p. 60). In the long list of Rajas we do not find the name, Hari Chand, mentioned even once. On the other hand, the Sikh records are all very positive in connecting Hari Chand with Nalgarh. Hari Chand thus might have been a younger son who had been sent by his father to assist Fatch Shah, the chief himself being too old to join personally.

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, VIII, 11-13.

² *Ibid.*, VIII, 15.

³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 20, 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII, 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, 23.

fray, now personally undertook the direction of affairs.¹ In his second attempt the Guru struck Bhikhan Khan in his face and the latter fled precipitately leaving the horse behind, which was immediately killed.² Now began the great duel between the Guru and Hari Chand who fought with great skill and dash and sent hundreds to the other world.³ The Guru says: "Hari Chand in his rage drew forth his arrow. He struck my steed with one and then discharged another at me but God preserved me and it only grazed my ear in its flight. His third arrow penetrated the buckle of my waist-belt and reached my body but wounded me not. It is only God who protected me knowing me his servant. When I felt the touch of the arrow my anger was kindled. I took up my bow and began to discharge arrows in abundance. Upon this my adverseries began to flee. I took aim and killed the young chief, Hari Chand."⁴ The death of Hari Chand was the signal for a disorderly retreat on the part of the hillmen and the Guru's victory was complete.⁵

III. The battle of Nadaun

As we have said before, after the victory of Bhangani the Guru did not remain at Paunta but came to Kahlur where he founded the village of Anandpur. Many days passed and the Guru "fostered the faithful and rooted out all the wicked."⁶ Those who had kept themselves away from the field of Bhangani were driven out of the place and the Guru thus seems to have busily engaged himself in putting his house in order. He was

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, VIII, 24.

² *Ibid.*, VIII, 25.

³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 26-28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII, 29-33. (Macauliffe's translation, Vol. V, p. 44).

⁵ Narang states that Syed Budhoo Shah, the Chief of Sadhowra, at whose recommendation the Guru had taken the Afghans into his service, hearing of their desertion, hastened to the Guru's help with a force of two thousand men and with this timely aid the Guru obtained a complete victory over the allied Rajas (*op cit.*, p. 153). The story is given in the *Panth Prakas* (XXIII, 11-16). It is stated that Budhoo Shah sent two of his sons with one thousand soldiers. But as nothing of this occurs in the *Bachitra Natak* or the *Gur Bilas* we have not incorporated it in our account of the battle.

⁶ *Bachitra Natak*, VIII, 38.

now apparently living on friendly terms with Bhim Chand of Kahlur and the occasion soon came when the Guru was called upon to give a practical demonstration of his friendship.

Narang states that the battle of Bhangani made a great impression upon the Hill chiefs and they now began to regard the Guru's propaganda with the seriousness it deserved. The Rajas hastened to make an offensive and defensive alliance with him, and supported by the Guru, at once took up the course of passive resistance and refused to send up their yearly tribute to the imperial exchequer. An army was sent against the Rajas by the Mughal Government to realise the arrears and a bloody battle was fought near Nadaun in which the Rajas, with the help of the Khalsa, inflicted a severe defeat on the imperial troops.¹ But it must be pointed out here that there is no evidence for such a general statement. The Khalsa had not yet come into existence and the battle of Nadaun was not won by the united efforts of the Hill chiefs, backed up by the forces of the Guru. The account given in the *Bachitra Natak* is, no doubt, involved, and it often becomes difficult to understand to which party a particular chief belonged but it is certain that at least Raja Kripal of Kangra and Raja Dayal of Bijharwal fought on the side of the Muhammadan general, and there is no suggestion anywhere that the defection of the Rajas had any connection with the Guru's victory at Bhangani.

The Guru's account begins rather abruptly. He says: "Many days passed in this way till Miyan Khan went to Jammu and sent Alif Khan to Nadaun. Immediately quarrel broke out with Bhim Chand. The Raja called me to assist him in the struggle and I joined his side."² Miyan Khan thus seems to have been entrusted with a specific mission and while he himself went to Jammu to settle accounts with the trans-Ravi principalities, he sent his lieutenant Alif Khan eastwards with the object of bringing the Kangra Hill states under subjection. This is confirmed by the *Gur Bilas*,³ and it thus appears that during

¹ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

² *Bachitra Natak*, IX, 1, 2.

³ *Gur Bilas*, VII, 30, 31.

Aurangzib's continued absence in the Deccan great administrative irregularities arose in the Punjab and the Hill Rajas took advantage of the situation in withholding payment of tribute. During the period of the Sultanate these Rajas continued to maintain, more or less, practical independence of the Delhi Government, but "with the advent of Mughal ascendancy they were compelled to bow to a foreign yoke." Kangra was conquered by Akbar and soon afterwards the other principalities of the western hills came directly under his control. The fort of Kangra was garrisoned by imperial troops under a Mughal *Faujdar*. Next Todar Mal "annexed a large portion of the Kangra Valley and made a similar demand on each of the other states proportionate to their means." The Emperor's Finance Minister is said to have taken the meat and left the bones, or, in other words, the fertile tracts were all annexed and the Rajas were left only with the bare hills. "To ensure the fidelity of the hill Rajas, Akbar adopted the policy of retaining as hostages at his court a prince from each of the States and we learn that in the beginning of Jahangir's reign there were 22 young princes from the Punjab Hills in attendance on the Emperor." Since the conquest by Akbar the Hill chiefs were tributary to the Mughal Empire and it appears that they were liberally treated. They were left much to themselves in the government of their principalities and were allowed to exercise the functions and wield the power of independent sovereigns. In spite of one or two isolated instances of rebellion, the Hill Rajas, on the whole, seem to have continued in friendship with the imperial court, as is proved by the letters and valuable presents received from the Emperors and still in the possession of many of the old ruling families. On the whole, the Mughal rule sat very lightly on the Rajas and some of the chiefs gained a high place in the imperial favour and were given *mansab* or military rank in the Mughal army and advanced to important offices in the administration.¹ The inducement must have been very great for these

¹ See the admirable article on the "Mian," a superior class of Hill Rajputs, by Dr. J. Hutchison of the Chamba Mission. (Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. III).

rulers to rise in rebellion against the Mughal Government and it seems hardly likely that the Guru's propaganda was the only or the sole cause of it, particularly as the disaffection seems to have spread even among the States of the Dogra Circle on the western side of the Ravi. As Macauliffe suggests,¹ it appears more probable that a general laxity in the administration encouraged the Hill chiefs to stop payment of tribute, though there cannot be any doubt that the Guru played a very important part in the later developments, as we find that the first expedition sent by Dilawar Khan and possibly also the second were directed specifically against him.

The Sikh records state that Alif Khan, in the first instance, addressed himself to Raja Kripal of Kangra. The latter submitted readily and also perhaps persuaded Raja Dayal of Bijharwal to pay tribute to Alif Khan. Kripal then suggested to Alif Khan that Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur was the greatest of all the allied Hill chiefs. Were he first to pay tribute, all the rest would follow his example, and then there would be no necessity for warfare. Acting on this suggestion Alif Khan sent an envoy to Bhim Chand, but the latter refused to pay tribute and prepared for war.

Raja Kripal did not exaggerate when he said that Bhim Chand was the greatest of all the allied chiefs. Even when a mere boy of fourteen, he successfully defended his throne against a powerful pretender over whom he gained a signal victory, "the first of a brilliant series of successes in the field of arms." He afterwards defeated the Rajas of Bashahr, Mandi and Kotkhai,² and it is, therefore, just in the fitness of things that we should find him at the head of the allied combination against Alif Khan, though the crowning achievement of his life was yet to come. From the Guru's account we learn that the combination included, besides Bhim Chand and the Guru himself, Raja Sukhdev of Jasrot, Prithi Chand of Dadhwar, and two other powerful

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 51. *Gur Bilas*, VII, 31-37.

² *Simla Hill States Gazetteer, Bilaspore*, p. 6.

chiefs, named Ram Singh and Raj Singh.¹ Bhim Chand did not wait to be attacked but immediately advanced to give battle to Alif Khan, who had taken his position near Nadaun,² a petty town on the left bank of the Beas, 20 miles south-east of the Kangra town. The Muhammadan general, together with Raja Kripal of Katoch and Raja Dayal of Bijharwal, was encamped on an eminence and had, therefore, superiority of position.³ The Guru's description of the battle is rather confused and it is not easy to understand the various phases and developments. It appears that the action commenced with an attack on Raja Kripal Chand but it was driven back and then Bhim Chand organised another offensive on a bigger scale. All the allied chiefs, as well as the Guru, were called upon to participate in the attack, Bhim Chand himself leading "invoking the name of Hanuman in his mouth."⁴ Kripal fought with great determination and bravery and exhibited the true virtues of a Rajput.⁵ But the others fought desperately and soon the troops of Katoch were surrounded on all sides. The people of the tribes of Nanglu, Panglu, Jaswar and Guler advanced in order and on

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, IX, 3-4.

The Guru does not tell us wherefrom Raj Singh and Ram Singh came. This Ram Singh was very probably the same person whom we find in alliance with Raja Gopal of Guler on the occasion of Hussain Khan's expedition. The *Gur Bilas* states that he was the Raja of Jaswal (VII, 43), while according to Macauliffe, the Raja of Jaswal, no doubt, assisted Bhim Chand on the occasion but his name was Kesari Chand (*op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 51-52). However, all our records tell us that Raja Gopal in his struggle with Hussain Khan had only one powerful chief as his ally, whose name, according to the Guru, was Ram Singh. The Guru also informs us that on the side of Raja Gopal of Guler, the Raja of Jaswal fought with great determination (*Bachitra Natak*, XI, 33). Ram Singh, therefore, was none other than the Raja of Jaswal and it seems that Macauliffe is wrong. (See also *Gur Bilas*, VII, 90).

² *Kangra District Gazetteer*, p. 258. In later days it became a favourite place of residence of Raja Sansar Chand who built himself a palace at Amtar on the river bank, one mile from the town, where he held his court during summer.

³ *Bachitra Natak*, IX, 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, IX, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IX, 8-14.

the other side, Raja Dayal of Bijharwal defended mightily.¹ At this stage the Guru himself entered into the fray and his own part in the battle he thus describes: "Then this insignificant creature took up his gun and aimed at one of the Rajas. The Raja reeled and fell upon the ground, so unerringly was the shot directed, but even then the angry chief thundered. I then threw off the gun and took up arrows in my hand. I drew out four and discharged all of them. Then again I took three others and discharged them with my left hand, (though) whether they struck anybody or not I do not know. Then the almighty God hastened the end of the fight and the enemy were driven out into the river."² Alif Khan fled precipitately and Bhim Chand and his allies were completely victorious.

The Guru states that after the victory he encamped on the side of the river and remained there for eight days. He visited the palaces of the various Rajas and then took his leave. The two parties came to terms and the Guru, on his part, returned to Anandpur after having plundered the village of Alsun on his way.³ We are thus introduced to two very interesting questions, *viz.*, the reconciliation between the two parties and the plunder of the village of Alsun. The later Sikh records tell us nothing about the first and therefore we are left to mere guess-work. Whether Alif Khan also was a party in the negotiations or merely the Hill chiefs of the two sides came to an understanding among themselves, it is difficult to say. Very soon afterwards we find that Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur gave up his attitude of defiance, and it is significant that Raja Gopal of Guler and his

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, IX, 16. Thus it appears that Guler also supported Bhim Chand and this is confirmed by the *Gur Bilas* (VII, 41). It seems to us, however, that the Guru is here referring to the clans of Jaswal and Guleria and not to the states of those names. Jaswal and Guleria form two of the six principal Katoch clans and gave their names to the states of those names. The Nanglu is "a sept of Rajputs, descended from Chuha Mian, son of Sangar Chand, 16th Raja of Kahlur." (Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 156). Possibly the Panglu also is another Rajput sept of this type.

² *Bachitra Natak*, IX, 17-19.

³ *Ibid.*, IX, 22-24.

ally Ram Singh, who subsequently distinguished themselves in their struggle against Hussain Khan, were at first willing to come to terms by the payment of tribute. It may not be improbable that inspite of their initial success at Nadaun the Rajas became convinced of the futility of prolonging the conflict and came to an understanding among themselves that they would make their submission, though, as we shall see later on, the demands of the Mughal Government proved too much for the scanty resources of some of the Hill chiefs, and the excesses of the Muhammadan general, Hussain Khan, compelled them to continue the desperate game of defiance. In that case we would perhaps be justified in regarding the plunder of Alsun as an act of retaliation on the part of the Guru, for he might very well regard the understanding referred to above as a desertion of himself. Macauliffe says that the village of Alsun was situated within the territories of Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur but he gives a somewhat garbled version of the plunder. We are told that the inhabitants refused to sell supplies to the Guru's troops and at last the Guru was compelled to order his followers that supplies be forcibly taken at current rates.¹ As far as we are aware, there is no authority for this statement and the evidence of the more important records² leaves no room for doubt that the entire village was looted.

IV. The expeditions sent by Dilawar Khan

The Guru had thus openly joined the standard of rebellion and inextricably compromised himself in the eyes of the Mughal Government. The position thus became somewhat curious. Some of the Rajas had stopped payment of tribute, and when the 'Mughal Government sent an army to enforce its demands, the Rajas took up arms and asked the Guru to help them which he did. A brilliant victory for the allies followed but still the Rajas decided to abandon their position and very probably came

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 54.

² *Bachitra Natak*, IX, 24. *Gur Bilas*, VII, 70. *Panth Prakas*, XXXIV, 7. *Gur Sobha*, III, 11.

to an understanding among themselves that they would make their submission. This is, perhaps, the only way in which we can possibly interpret the Guru's words about the treaty, already referred to.¹ We need not be surprised, therefore, that the next expedition was sent specifically against the Guru himself and it shows clearly that the Guru had been playing a very important part in this affair, though we find it difficult to believe that his propaganda and encouragement were the sole or even the primary cause of the widespread disaffection of the Hill chiefs, both of the Dogra and the Jalandhar circles.²

The Guru informs us that after the battle of Nadaun many days passed during which he was again engaged in hunting out the apostates.³ But he was not allowed to remain long in this manner as Dilawar Khan sent his son against him. It is difficult to say who this Dilawar Khan was. The Guru himself gives us no hint and there is no unanimity among the other Sikh records. Narang says that he was the Governor of Kangra.⁴ The *Panth Prakas* says that he was the *Subahdar* of Lahore.⁵ Bhai Sukha Singh merely states that he was a Muhammadan chief⁶ and Macauliffe says that he was a semi-independent local chieftain "who had attained power in the Punjab during the insurrections which arose while Aurangzib was employed in the Dakhan."⁷ To us, however, it seems more probable that he was

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, IX, 23. The Guru says: "Then I took leave of the Rajas and returned home and they proceeded in the other direction to negotiate for reconciliation. The two parties came to terms and therefore the story ends."

² "It is a popular saying that between the Sutlej and the Chenab there are twenty-two principalities, eleven on either side of the Ravi." The cluster of states between the Chenab and the Ravi is termed the Dogra Circle, while that between the Ravi and the Sutlej is known as the Jalandhar Circle. (*Kangra District Gazetteer*, p. 24). We have already seen that Sukhdev of Jasrot, a state belonging to the Dogra Circle, assisted Bhim Chand in the battle of Nadaun and the fact that Miyan Khan himself went towards Jammu leaves little room for doubt that the rebellion was widespread.

³ *Bachitra Natak*, X, 1.

⁴ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁵ *Panth Prakas*, XXIV, 8.

⁶ *Gur Bilas*, VII, 75.

⁷ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 55.

an official of the Mughal Government. A close study of the *Bachitra Natak* clearly reveals the fact that the expeditions form, as it were, so many links in a single chain. It has been seen that Miyan Khan had been, in the first instance, entrusted with the task of subduing the Hill Rajas and he had sent Alif Khan eastwards while he himself proceeded towards Jammu. Alif Khan failed and next came the son of Dilawar Khan. He, too, returned without achieving anything and then followed the expeditions under Hussain Khan and Jujhar Singh, two of the generals of Dilawar Khan. These also were defeated and killed and when the news of these repeated disasters reached Aurangzib, he became very angry and sent one of his own sons to the Punjab to set matters right. Thus it is clear that a regular and systematic campaign was being carried on against the Hill Rajas and it is very likely that it was engineered either by the Viceroy of Lahore or by the Viceroy of Kashmir.

Now the son of this Dilawar Khan, whoever he might have been, made an attack upon the Guru but to no purpose. His object seems to have been to surprise Anandpur and, with that end in view, he assembled his troops at about midnight and prepared for attack.¹ When the Muhammadan army reached the bank of the river, the Guru was awakened by an attendant² and immediately the sound of alarm was raised. The Guru's soldiers hastily armed themselves but the *Khanzada's* army gave up the struggle even before it was actually commenced. The Guru says: "The river wore a dreadful appearance and the soldiers suffered terribly from cold. From this side my heroes thundered and the bloody Khans fled with their weapons unused."³ It appears that there was heavy rain and the neighbouring ravine was overflowed.⁴ This proved too much for the *Khanzada* and he had to beat a hasty retreat. The expedition thus signally failed and the Guru informs us that the

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, X, 2.

² *Ibid.*, X, 3.

³ *Ibid.*, X, 6.

⁴ We are told that "the grateful Sikhs up to this day call the ravine by the name of the helpful brook." (Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 155).

Muhammadans then vented their wrath on the poor people of Barwa and finally established themselves at Bhallan,¹ which seems to have been a place of some strategic importance. It appears from the Guru's account that with the disastrous end of Hussain Khan's expedition, which followed that of the *Khazada*, Bhallan slipped away into the hands of the Rajas. Jujhar Singh recaptured it on behalf of Dilawar Khan but was immediately attacked by Gaj Singh. Bhallan witnessed the battle that followed and the Muhammadan party was again driven out.²

This discomfiture of the *Khazada* served only to strengthen the resolution of Dilawar Khan who immediately sent his slave-general Hussain Khan with a stronger army to retrieve the disaster. The subsequent developments make the initial aim of this expedition somewhat obscure, but as we have hinted above, it seems that in this instance too, the objective was the Guru's stronghold at Anandpur. The Guru says that if Hussain Khan had met Raja Gopal of Guler two days later, he would certainly have advanced upon Anandpur, but fortunately destiny "had thrown the apple of discord amidst them."³ Thus it seems very probable that Hussain Khan was unexpectedly diverted from the main object of his expedition and the failure of his negotiations with Raja Gopal of Guler saved the Guru from what might very well have been a disaster for him.

At first Hussain Khan carried all before him. The Raja of Dadhlwal was brought completely under control and his sons were made prisoners. Next Hussain Khan thoroughly looted the *Dun*, nobody being able to withstand him. Food grains were taken by force and then distributed among his own followers. It appears that he was soon joined by Raja Kripal of Katoch and Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur and his depredations continued. About this time Raja Gopal of Guler, together with a powerful chief named Ram Singh, came to meet Hussain Khan, who felt

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, X, 9.

² *Ibid.*, XII, 2.

³ *Ibid.*, XI, 5. The *Gur Sobha* definitely states that the objective was Anandpur (IV, 10).

extremely flattered and became blind in his vanity. He did not even condescend to notice them and "with the Rajas of Katoch and Kahlur at his side, he thought that he was peerless in this world." However, Raja Gopal of Guler and Ram Singh offered him the money that they had brought with them, but the amount fell short of the expectation of Hussain Khan and the offer was rejected. Therefore the two chiefs left Hussain Khan's camp and retired to their own places.¹

Hussain Khan took this as an unpardonable affront and he became so very angry that he did not pause to consider the question of ways and means but at once ordered the beating of the drum for advance. It appears that Raja Gopal and his men were soon afterwards besieged by Hussain Khan's troops. The investment lasted for some time and at last Raja Gopal had to yield to the clamour of his own men who had been suffering terribly from want of food and drink. A messenger was sent to Hussain Khan with proposals of peace but the slave-general remained as obdurate as ever. "Either give me ten thousand rupees immediately or take death upon your head," said he. The Guru had, in the meantime, sent a follower of his named Sangatia, possibly to assist Raja Gopal in his difficulties, and it was mainly through his good offices that the Guleria chief could be persuaded to go over to the enemy's camp under solemn assurances of personal safety. But the negotiations again broke down and then Raja Kripal thought within himself, "Such an opportunity will never come again; time, in its circle, deceives everybody. Gopal must immediately be disposed of; either he must be made a prisoner or be killed." But before this evil design could be carried out Raja Gopal got scent of what was going on and fled to his own men. No other alternative was now left but an open trial of strength.²

And the battle that followed was the bloodiest of the series. Raja Gopal and his ally fought with the courage of desperation, and as it often happens in such cases, they gained a complete

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, XI, 2-9.

² *Ibid.*, XI, 10-15.

victory inspite of heavy odds. The extreme eagerness of Raja Gopal to come to terms with Hussain Khan clearly shows that he did not think himself equal to the contest but when all attempts at compromise failed, he adopted the counsel of despair and prepared for the worst. It appears that besides the Rajas of Katoch and Kahlur, Hussain Khan was assisted by several officers of whom the most conspicuous was Himmat, as also by a warrior named Hari Singh,¹ of whose identity we know nothing. On the side of Raja Gopal fought Sangatia, Ram Singh and the Raja of Jaswal,² and the last two, as we have seen, were very probably identical. Of the persons who played a prominent part in the affair, one other remains, *viz.*, the Raja of Chandel,³ but from the Guru's account it is difficult to determine the party to which he belonged and unfortunately the other Sikh records are silent about him.

The battle seems to have raged with great vehemence and, considering the scale of the operations, it must be said that the carnage that was wrought was appalling. Hussain Khan's defeat was decisive and complete, the leader himself being killed together with Raja Kripal.⁴ Himmat also shared the same fate. The Guru states that when the battle was over and the Muhammadan party had left the field, Raja Gopal and his ally gave their attention to the wounded and the dead. Among the wounded they found Himmat, and Ram Singh thus spoke to Raja Gopal, "That Himmat, who has been the root of all these quarrels, has now fallen wounded in our hands." When Gopal heard this, he immediately killed Himmat and did not allow him to get up alive.⁵ What happened to the other officers is not quite clear. On the side of Raja Gopal the Guru's emissary named Sangatia was killed with his companions,⁶ but the other leaders were all safe.

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, XI, 31, 32, 54.

² *Ibid.*, XI, 33.

³ *Ibid.*, XI, 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XI, 52, 65.

⁵ *Ibid.*, XI, 67, 68.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XI, 57.

Thus the expedition of Hussain Khan, which had begun prosperously, ended in complete disaster, and it seems that for this the rashness of the general was primarily responsible. The Guru tells us that Hussain Khan had thrown all tactical considerations to the winds.¹ In his blind fury and vanity he became reckless and the price he had to pay was terribly high. The Guru was thus saved from a contingency which might easily prove calamitous and he had every reason to be grateful to the Lord "who saved him by decreeing the din of battle elsewhere."² But all was not over yet. Dilawar Khan made still another attempt to retrieve the situation. It seems probable that Raja Gopal's victory had again put heart into the rebellion and the success was followed up by the capture of Bhallan, where the son of Dilawar Khan had entrenched himself after the failure of his expedition against the Guru. The first act of Jujhar Singh, who was now sent by Dilawar Khan, was to recapture Bhallan;³ but before he could consolidate his position, he was attacked by Gaj Singh with all his troops and again a bloody battle followed. This time also the Muhammadan party was routed, both Jujhar Singh and his ally Chandan Rai being killed in the fray.⁴ The rebellion of the Rajas thus seemed justified by success but the final story still remains to be told.

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, XI, 10.

² *Ibid.*, XI, 69.

³ *Ibid.*, XII, 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XII, 10, 12.

From the Guru's account it appears that on the side of Jujhar Singh fought the Raja of Chandel (XII, 45). We are told soon afterwards that when Chandan Rai died, Jujhar Singh alone continued the fight. It may not be improbable, therefore, as Bhai Bishan Singh thinks (*op. cit.*, p. 162), that Chandan Rai was the Raja of Chandel. It should be noticed, however, that Gaji Chand of Chandel had assisted Fateh Shah at the battle of Bhangani and if Chandan Rai, too, was the Raja of Chandel, Gaji Chand must have died in the meantime. But we must point out that in the names of the Hill Rajas we always find a good deal of similarity among those belonging to the same family and the names Gaji Chand and Chandan Rai are so very dissimilar that a doubt is naturally raised. It may be that later copyists introduced some confusion in the Guru's record. We are told that the two heroes on the other side were Gaj Singh and the Raja of Jaswal. Bhai Bishan Singh identifies the two but that is hardly acceptable. Whether there has been some confusion between Gaji Chand and Gaj Singh,

V. The advent of the Shahzada

When the news of these repeated disasters reached Aurangzib he clearly realised that something drastic had become absolutely necessary and accordingly sent one of his own sons to restore order in the Punjab Hills.¹ The Prince took up his position at Lahore and sent an officer named Mirza Beg Mughal to reduce the hill tracts. Now began a war of vengeance and the Guru tells us that the first to suffer were those faint-hearted disbelievers, who had been seized with panic at the approach of the Prince and, having unceremoniously left the Guru's protection, taken shelter in the hills with all their treasures.² These were mercilessly plundered and those who escaped Mirza Beg were more cruelly dealt with by the four other relentless officers who succeeded him.

But the Guru's main object in introducing this topic seems to have been to read a lesson on apostasy, and we are left entirely in the dark as regards the details of the operations that were carried out under the orders of the Prince in order to bring the Hill chiefs under subjection. The other Sikh records also do not help us much but some facts stand out clearly enough. It is clear that the Guru was not touched much by the operations of the Prince and that the rebellion of the Rajas was completely crushed. It has been said that "the Rajas were taught a severe lesson by Mirza Beg, the imperial general. He inflicted upon them defeat after defeat, gave up their country to plunder, set fire to villages, took hundreds of prisoners and in order to make a lesson of them had them shaved clean, and their faces blackened, seated them on donkeys and made an exhibition of them throughout the disturbed area."³ We, however, find it difficult to accept these details though there cannot possibly be any doubt that the Rajas were taught a severe lesson

or between Gaj Singh and Raj Singh, it is difficult to say. The Guru's account seems confused and we are practically helpless because the other Sikh records ignore this incident.

¹ *Bachitra Natak*, XIII, 1.

² *Ibid.*, XIII, 2-4.

³ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

on this occasion. As far as we are aware, the only record that lends a somewhat dubious support to these statements is the *Bachitra Natak*. The Guru describes how the deserters were ruthlessly punished by Mirza Beg and his successors, but there occurs nothing in the verses in question that would entitle us to connect the Hill Rajas themselves with those deserters, though some of their subjects might have been associated with the latter. Moreover, as we have already pointed out, the Guru's object seems to have been to preach "a homily on loyalty to one's spiritual guide," and therefore we need not take his words as literally true, especially as he adopts the traditional Indian way of describing the shame and ignominy of a merciless punishment.

With regard to the other question, *viz.*, the escape of the Guru from the general disaster that must have overtaken the Hill Rajas, the story given in the *Gur Bilas* may perhaps be accepted.¹ We are told that a Khatri of Delhi named Nand Chand, who possessed some influence with the Prince, successfully pleaded on the Guru's behalf and thus it was that although the Guru had played a very important part throughout the rebellion, he was left unmolested, while all the rigours of Mirza Beg and his successors fell upon the unfortunate Hill Rajas. But that the Guru also had to pass through very anxious times is proved by some of his own letters, which have fortunately come down to us.²

¹ *Gur Bilas*, XVI, 171, 172.

² One of these letters is to the progenitors of the Phulkian house, in which the Guru asks urgently for assistance. The full text of the letter is given in the *Mahan Kosh* of Bhai Kahn Singh and it is dated *Sambat* 1753 (1696 A.D.). See Appendix B and also Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 224.

In one of his letters written to the Sangat at Dacca the Guru acknowledges the receipt of swords, clothes and money and asks for more; in another he asks for a first class war elephant and in a third "devotees are asked to come for *darshan* fully armed." These letters are unfortunately not dated but there are reasons to believe that they belong to the period we have been speaking of. (See *Dacca Review*, 1915, p. 23; 1916, pp. 316, 318).

CHAPTER IV

GURU GOBIND SINGH—THE REFORMATION

I. The Guru's Mission

We now come to the central climacteric of Guru Gobind Singh's career. His pontificate, we think, may very conveniently be divided into two distinct periods, during each of which he seems to have pursued somewhat different objectives. The convening of the great assembly at Keshgarh in 1699 and the introduction of *pahul* may, for this purpose, be regarded as the diverging point and the two periods may thus be characterised as the pre-Khalsa and post-Khalsa periods. As we have seen, during the pre-Khalsa period the Guru's object seems to have been to enter gradually into the fraternity of the Hill Rajas and establish himself as one of their equals. He completely identified himself with the cause of these chieftains when they rose in rebellion against the Mughal Government and did all he could to further the common cause. But the differences between the Guru and the Hill Rajas were fundamental and, when the rebellion of the Rajas was finally crushed and they returned to their allegiance to the Mughal Government, the Guru found himself completely isolated. The forbearance of the *Shahzada*, no doubt, gave him a temporary respite but the storm might burst any moment and the Guru had now none to depend on but himself and his followers. He therefore immediately busied himself in putting his house in order and in bringing about a transformation in the ideology of his followers. They were to be fitted to meet the situation with their own unaided strength and the steps that the Guru took to achieve this end brought the Khalsa into existence.

In the *Bachitra Natak*, which was very probably composed near about this time, the Guru himself explains his mission and the objects that he sought to achieve. Much of what the Guru

writes is beyond our purview and belongs, more or less, to the domain of mythology but it is not difficult to get at the few points that he wants to make out. The Guru gives an account of the origin of the *Sodhi* family to which he belonged¹ and then speaks particularly of himself. He says that he was performing penance on the mountain of Hem Kunt and by his great austerities had become blended with God. But by the Lord's order he had to assume birth though he himself was unwilling to come. Then comes a long account of what the Lord had told him about the demons, the gods and the eight *Sakhis*, the *Sidhs*, the *Sadhs* and the *Rikhis* whom He had created in succession. None of these recognised the real essence and each became absorbed in himself. Indeed, "whoever was clever in the world established his own sect and no one found the Creator." Next, the Lord spoke about the prophets but these, too, became wrapped up in themselves, soon forgot to recognise the Supreme Being and utterly failed to fix the True Name in man's heart. Finally, the Lord told the Guru:

"I have cherished thee as My son,
And created thee to extend My religion.
Go and spread My religion there,
And restrain the world from senseless acts."²

This is the gist of a long story and we think that the only point that is necessary for us to note is that the Guru here directly claims a divine sanction for his mission.

The Guru then gives us the essence of his religion. After communicating to him the secret God had sent him to this world. He was going to tell the world what God had told him and was not prepared to remain silent for fear of mortals. He did not care for religious garbs, matted hair and earrings but would "sow the seed of the Invisible" and would teach men to obtain the Supreme Being by singing the Name of the Infinite. He would not care for *any other name* nor establish *any other god* in his heart. He would only meditate on the name of the Endless

¹ The story has been given in Vol. I of the present work, pp. 222, 223.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 296-299.

One, which would remove endless sorrows, and those who meditated on any one else should die of arguments and contentions. Spurious religion was to be regarded as superstition, for God cannot be obtained by hypocrisy, display or mummary; only "He who keepeth his heart in subjection recognises the Supreme Being." All these are in complete agreement with what had hitherto been regarded as the essentials of Sikhism but the Guru strikes an entirely new note when he says:

"The divine Guru sent me for religion's sake :
On this account I have come into the world—
'Extend the faith everywhere ;
Seize and destroy the evil and the sinful.'
Understand this, ye holy men, in your souls.
I assumed birth for the purpose
Of spreading the faith, saving the saints,
And extirpating all tyrants."¹

Two points are important to notice here. In the first place, what we have here is a far-off cry from the spirit that prevailed during the earlier days of Sikhism when, being repeatedly molested by the local Muhammadans, the Sikhs of Goindwal asked Guru Amar Das in despair as to how long they were to endure this tyranny and the Guru replied: "As long as you live; it is not proper for saints to take revenge." But Guru Gobind Singh now says that all tyrants are to be extirpated. There is a story given in the *Gur Bilas* which appears to us to be extremely apposite in this connection and we would mention it here for what it is worth. It is said that when, towards the close of his career, the Guru, with a few companions, was proceeding southwards in response to an invitation from Aurangzib, he came across a shrine belonging to the followers of Dadu. The incumbent of the shrine learnt about the identity of the Guru and his circumstances from the Sikhs who were with him and invited the Guru to enter the shrine and take rest for some time. The Guru complied with the request and, when both were seated, the incumbent told the Guru that no claim should be placed on anything in this world and that

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 300, 301.

the Guru had suffered because he had done so. In reply the Guru said that claims should, by all means, be kept and enforced and all enemies plundered. There was silence for some time and then the follower of Dadu said that having regard to the circumstances of the *Kal Age* a man should lower down his head if anybody threw a brick at him. The saints were all of opinion that in this age forgiveness, patience, humility and the like should be the guiding principles of life. The Guru also agreed that due regard should be had to the circumstances of the time and therefore, if anybody threw a brick, a stone was to be thrown on his head. The *Kal Age* had reached such a stage that success would come only if a brick could be returned with a stone. People should therefore get fully armed. Excepting the few pure-minded, nobody, in those days, cared for saints, and that was the reason why he had created the Khalsa.¹ The Guru's was thus frankly a new ideal, though, no doubt, it was elaborated on the heritage that he had received from his predecessors, to meet what, in his view, were the pressing needs of the time.

Secondly, the Guru's categorical assertion that he had assumed birth for spreading the faith, saving the saints and extirpating all tyrants, reads like an echo of what we get in the *Gita*.² But there is a difference; the Guru merely claims that he is the chosen instrument of God for the redemption of the world and he is careful to point out:

“All who call me the Supreme Being
Shall fall into the pit of hell.
Recognise me as God's servant only :
Have no doubt whatever of this.
I am the slave of the Supreme Being
And have come to behold the wonders of the world.”³

Most religious teachers are generally deified by their followers or worshipped as proclaimed instruments of God and

¹ *Gur Bilas*, XXIV, 17-38.

² *Gita*, IV, 7, 8.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 299, 300.

words are soon put into their mouths to prove indisputably their divine descent. But it is much rarer to find teachers themselves declaring that God charged them with the mission of showing to mankind the true ways of religion. Of one such prophet Rodwell says "that he was urged on by an intense desire to proclaim that great truth about the unity of the God-head which had taken full possession of his soul, that he worked himself up into a belief that he had received a divine call, that he was carried on by the force of circumstances and by gradually increasing successes to believe himself the accredited messenger of God."¹ Something very similar may also be said about the Guru. During his early retirement in the hills he had made himself thoroughly familiar with all Hindu literature relating to incarnations and other divinities and this must have fired his imagination. "He seems to have been deeply impressed by the idea which runs throughout the Pauranic literature, *vis.*, the idea of the saviour appearing from time to time to uphold righteousness and destroy unrighteousness, to uproot evil and establish good, to destroy the oppressor and rescue the weak and the innocent."² The sad plight in which he found his followers as well as the Hindus in general, religious strifes brought about by the persecuting policy of Aurangzib, the prevailing corruption, ignorance and superstition, and his own personal resentment at his father's execution must have generated in his mind an earnest conviction that this was undoubtedly the time for the rise of a saviour, and his strong impulses and the force of circumstances in which he was placed soon led him to work himself up into a belief that he himself was the man the times needed.

The Guru's mission, therefore, was to spread the true faith and to extirpate the oppressor and the wicked. But for these purposes, particularly the second, the old weapons of service, humility and prayer were wholly out of place and in the very opening verses of the *Bachitra Natak* the Guru makes his position clear. His reliance was on God and the Holy Sword.

¹ Rodwell, *Koran*, Preface, p. 13.

² Narang, *op. cit.*, pp. 131, 132.

The past that he had inherited and the circumstances in which he was placed naturally led him to think of God as the punisher of the wicked, and as the Sword is a great weapon for that purpose, in the Guru's mind the two becomes identical. "God subdues enemies, so does the Sword; therefore the Sword is God, and God is the Sword."¹ The Guru writes:

"I bow with love and devotion to the Holy Sword.
Assist me that I may complete this work.
Thou art the Subduer of Countries, the Destroyer of the
armies of the wicked, in the battle-field
Thou greatly adornest the brave.

I bow to the Arrow and the Musket,
I bow to the Sword, spotless, fearless, and unbreakable ;
I bow to the powerful Mace and Lance
To which nothing is equal.

I bow to the Arrow and the Cannon
Which destroy the enemy.
I bow to the Sword and the Rapier
Which destroy the evil.
I bow to all weapons called Shastar (which may be held).
I bow to all weapons called Astar (which may be hurled
or discharged)."²

The various weapons of war are, as it were, deified and the Guru leaves us in no doubt as to the method that he contemplated in the fulfilment of his mission.

II. The alleged worship of Durga

But before we can take up the study of the practical steps through which this mission was sought to be fulfilled, another matter has got to be disposed of. Almost all writers, Sikh and non-Sikh, assert that the Guru prefaced his attempts at reformation by performing a sacrifice in order to obtain the blessings of the goddess Durga in his new venture. Here we come to the most controversial question in the career of Guru Gobind Singh. On the one hand, we have the united testimony of a number

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 83.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 287.

of writers and, on the other, the stubborn fact that such an act on the Guru's part would mean an unthinkable contradiction of one of the fundamentals of Sikhism and of his own repeated injunctions. Some modern Sikh writers, therefore, deny the story altogether;¹ while others suggest that the Guru's sole object in undertaking the ceremony was to demonstrate the futility and utter hollowness of all such practices.²

The *Gur Bilas*, possibly the earliest of the records where the story is mentioned, gives a vivid and picturesque account of the incident. Guru Gobind Singh is said to have assembled a large number of Brahmans and after having tested them, dismissed those who partook of meat and wine, allowing only those who lived mainly on milk to remain with him. The Guru expressed to these latter his desire of performing a *hom* (ceremony of burnt offering) in order to obtain the blessings of the goddess Durga and sought their advice in the matter. They told the Guru that Dattanand of Ujjain was the fittest person to undertake the charge of an affair like this, and he was accordingly sent for and soon arrived with a number of assistants. Dattanand had then an interview with the Guru and in reply to the Guru's questions explained to him the ways in which the ceremony would have to be performed. He told the Guru that in the *Kal Age* it was extremely difficult to make the *Devi* manifest and, moreover, the expenses for such an undertaking would be enormous. The Guru assured him of all expenses and soon collected a large amount from the Sikhs who had assembled in a fair on the occasion of the *Holi*. Dattanand had then a second interview with the Guru. He prepared a long list of the things that would be necessary and asked the Guru to select a suitable site on the Sutlej where the *hom* might be performed. The Guru then gave the necessary orders for completing the arrangements. Dattanand again warned the Guru that not less than 1,25,000 rupees and about 4 years' time would be necessary to

¹ Kahn Singh, *Ham Hindu Nahin*, pp. 53, 56, 116-124. Kartar Singh, *Life of Guru Gobind Singh*, XV.

² *Panth Prakas*, pp. 166-174. Teja Singh, *Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism*, p. 52.

bring the *hom* to a successful end but the Guru told him not to worry and to get on with it.

The ceremony commenced on the bank of the Sutlej and it opened with songs in praise of the *Devi*. After these preliminaries were over the Guru began the worship of the *Devi* under the directions of Dattanand. The Guru's experiences thereafter are described in some detail and these were mostly of a fearful character. However, after some days Dattanand told the Guru that the time for the *Devi's* appearance was drawing near and that it was now necessary to offer her a sacrifice. The Guru is said to have named some Sikhs but Dattanand insisted that the Guru should offer for sacrifice one of his own sons, preferably the son whom he wanted to succeed him. The Guru, however, refused to accede to this request and it seems that a Sikh was made to serve for the purpose instead. Dattanand then asked the Guru to be ready for the *Devi's* manifestation and left the Guru alone on the spot, after warning him that the appearance of the *Devi* would be accompanied by great natural calamities. The Guru was warned not to be afraid and asked to go on repeating the *mantras* prescribed to him. The Guru was now alone and his experiences were terrible. But he remained still. Thereafter his experiences became more terrible; high stormy winds, devastating rains, earthquakes and similar other disturbances came in quick succession and it seemed that the world was going to pieces. Still the Guru sat composed. At long last the *Devi* manifested herself and the Guru greeted her with the words, "*Jay Jagmat.*" The *Devi* blessed the Guru, gave him her own sword and then disappeared. The Sikhs then assembled from all quarters and there were great rejoicings at this happy and auspicious termination of the affair.¹

In other records the story is given with variations. For instance, it is said by some that the Guru was ready to offer one of his sons as a sacrifice to the *Devi* but that the opposition of his mother and wives stood in the way and compelled him to choose a Sikh instead.² Again, it is said that when the *Devi*

¹ *Gur Bilas*, VIII.

² *Rose, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 695. *Cunningham, op. cit.*, p. 70.

made her appearance the Guru, in terror, shut his eyes and it was therefore ordained that he would have no success in his life time but that his sect would flourish after his death.¹ Instances might be multiplied but these details belong to a realm which is clearly beyond our province and it is no use pursuing them further.

The only thing that is important for us to consider in this connection is as to whether there is any truth in the tradition that the Guru had performed this *hom* ceremony. As we have said, this question is a highly controversial one and has become more so with the changes that have taken place in Sikh mentality during the last half a century or so. Most of the older writers, Sikh and non-Sikh, accept the tradition as true, though, as we have seen, they often differ as to details. But a different note is struck in the *Panth Prakas* for the first time. This book was written in 1880 and, in the mean time, a movement had started among the Sikhs to raise Sikhism once again to the strict ideals of its founders. The contradiction involved in the story of the *hom* or ceremony soon attracted the attention of the reawakened Sikhs and an attempt was made to explain it away by suggesting that the Guru's object in performing it was to show up the hollowness of the pretensions of the Brahmans and the utter futility of all such practices. Consequently, the story now assumed a different character.

It is stated by Bhai Gyan Singh, the author of the *Panth Prakas*, that some Brahmans suggested to the Guru that if he performed a *hom* in order to make the *Devi* manifest he might, with her aid and blessings, ensure his success against his enemies. They also informed the Guru that there was a Brahman named Kesho at Benares, who possessed supernatural powers and who might make the *Devi* appear if he was provided with the necessary facilities. The Guru did not agree, but in the meantime, Kesho came to hear of these proposals, and, as he was a very greedy man and knew of the open-handedness of the Guru, he himself came to Anandpur and represented to the Guru that if he once

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

made the goddess manifest he would be peerless in war as the *Devi* had been in her battles with the demons. The Guru now outwardly accepted the offer in order to demonstrate Kesho's insincerity and provided all that was required. The beautiful hill of Naina Devi was fixed as the spot where the *hom* was to be performed. After nine months had passed in worship and invocation Kesho declared that the time for the *Devi's* appearance was drawing near. Pressed by the Guru Kesho gave three dates, one after another, for the manifestation of the *Devi* but when nothing happened on any of these dates he told the Guru that some holy person must be offered as a sacrifice to the goddess before she could be made to disclose herself. Thereupon the Guru said that Kesho himself was the fittest person for this, for none could be holier than he. At this Kesho fled in terror and then "the Guru ordered that the materials which had been collected for the ceremony should be thrown into the hom-pit. Upon this a great flame shot up towards the heavens. When this was seen from afar, all the spectators felt certain that the Guru himself had caused Durga to appear. The Guru drew his sword and set out for Anandpur. When the people asked if the goddess had appeared to him, he raised his sword aloft, inasmuch as to say that by God's assistance his sword would perform the deed which the Brahmans attributed to Durga. The people then erroneously believed that the goddess had given him the sword."¹

It is clear that here we have a deliberate editing of the old tradition in order to make it more conformable to the gradual change that Sikh opinion was undergoing. But this position, too, was soon abandoned and it began to be stated that the *hom* had never been undertaken and that the story was all an invention. The teaching of the Guru and his predecessors with regard to the unity of the Godhead was so fundamental to the basic conception of Sikhism and the injunction to the Sikhs to worship none but the One True Lord was so categorical and imperative that it was clearly unthinkable that the Guru would contradict himself in this abject manner. Though it is true that such an

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 65.

argument can hardly be regarded as decisive in determining a factual issue in history, its force should, by no means, be underestimated. Thus the *hom* ceremony had either been undertaken in right earnest or had not taken place at all. The second view, that suggests that the Guru had undertaken the ceremony in order to demonstrate in a practical manner the futility of all such practices, appears to us to be unacceptable because of the very late origin of the story and also because the circumstances in which it arose enable us to guess the motive of its origin.

The account given in the *Gur Bilas*, of which a summary has already been given, is plain and unambiguous and the other writers also agree, more or less, with regard to the central theme, though, no doubt, there are differences in detail. The account current in the hills is also substantially of the same character. "The story goes that Guru Gobind before embarking on his campaign against the Turks sought the aid of Naina Devi. He brought with him a Brahman of Benares and for months kept up the *homa*. At last the Devi appeared and the Guru, awe-stricken, presented his sword which she touched and disappeared. The Brahman, however, declared that the stigma or defect in the rite caused by the Guru's display of fear could only be removed by the sacrifice of one of his sons. To this he agreed, but the mothers of his four sons objected. So one of his followers was sacrificed, the goddess reappeared and promised prosperity to his sect."¹ There can thus be no doubt that there exists a very strong tradition with regard to this *hom* ceremony. Indeed, one Sikh writer, whom Malcolm regards as "one of the most respectable and best informed authors of that sect", goes to the extent of saying that the Guru "spent much of his time, in devotion, at a temple of Durga Bhavani, the goddess of courage, by whom he was directed to unloose his hair and draw his sword. Govind, in consequence of this divine order, vowed he would preserve his hair, as consecrated to that divinity, and directed his followers to do the same."²

Most writers have found it difficult to brush aside this

¹ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 695.

² Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 49, 50.

solid mass of traditional evidence and the contradiction, referred to above, has been sought to be resolved by attributing a political motive to the Guru. Rose says: "Surrounded during his childhood by Hindu influences, Gobind Rai succeeded to his office under every temptation to remain within the pale of orthodox Hinduism."¹ As we have seen, during the whole of the pre-Khalsa period the Guru whole-heartedly mixed himself up in the affairs of the semi-independent Hill chieftains with the object of arriving at some sort of a lasting understanding with them. The Kangra hills, moreover, were the stronghold of Hinduism and the people were fanatically steeped in the *Devi* cult. Even now "*Devi* is a popular object of veneration all over the province, but her worship is most in vogue and most diversified in Ambala, Hoshiarpur and Kangra," and we are told that "in Kangra alone there are numerous local *Devis*, and 360 of them assembled together at the founding of the Kangra temple."² As Rose says, "we hear of no explicit condemnation of the cult of *Devi*", and though enjoined to worship none but the One True Lord, it is quite possible that "even the Sikhs cherished a lingering faith in the power of the goddess." Thus, whether looked at from the point of view of his own followers, or from wider aspects, the *Devi's* was an influence which was considerable, and Narang says: "The Guru did not believe in any deity except the True and Deathless One, but whether to show his followers that there was no such power, or to win over the popular sympathy and confidence of the populace as the chosen favourite of their favourite Deity, it seems to be beyond doubt that the Guru ordered a great sacrifice to be performed with the ostensible object of making the goddess appear."³

On the other hand, it is important to remember that the earliest of the records where the *hom* ceremony is mentioned is possibly the *Gur Bilas*, a work written as late as 1798, and it is indisputable that in course of the century that passed since

¹ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 694.

² *Ibid.*, p. 318.

³ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

the inauguration of Guru Gobind Singh's reforms, the Sikhs had travelled a long way off from his ideals. It is of course difficult to say to what extent the ideals of the Guru were realised in practice but there can absolutely be no doubt that the Sikhs of the earlier eighteenth century were truer to the Guru's principles in all respects than their successors of the days of the Sikh Monarchy. These latter had relapsed to many of the practices of Hinduism and this can be very fully illustrated by clear and indisputable evidence. We do not think that it is necessary to go into details and a few crucial examples would be enough for our purpose. The testimony of Forster and Malcolm clearly shows that the Sikhs of their days had reverted to caste usages both with regard to interdining and intermarriage and marriages even outside the community were also, by no means, rare, provided the caste considerations were favourable.¹ But apart from this question of caste, which every sect that arose from within Hinduism has found it difficult to eschew altogether, we find that Hindu gods and goddesses, Hindu religious shrines and well-known Hindu practices had again invaded Sikhism. For instance, during the last few days of his illness Maharaja Ranjit Singh is said to have bestowed in charity money, jewels and other property of the supposed value of fifty lakhs of rupees and "among his jewels he directed the well-known Koh-i-nur diamond to be sent to the temple of Jagannath."² Not only this; the Maharaja also bequeathed large offerings to the great shrines of India and Sardar Uttar Singh Sindhanwalia was sent on a mission to distribute the same.³ Sardar Atar Singh was sent to Gayaji⁴ to perform the usual rites for the dead Maharaja and his ashes were conveyed with due pomp and ceremony to the Ganges. Honighberger has left us details of the obsequies of the Maharaja on which occasion four of his wives and seven female slaves became *sati* or immolated themselves together with the Maharaja. The Brahmans recited their prayers from the

¹ Malcolm, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-137. Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

² Secret Consultations, 4th Dec., 1839, No. 78-80. (Imperial Record Department).

³ *Ibid.*, 21st Sep., 1840, No. 98.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24th Feb., 1840, No. 75.

Shastras and received lavish gifts and we find the same story repeated with regard to the funerals of Maharaja Kharak Singh and Prince Nau Nihal Singh.¹ These examples, many more like which might be added, leave little room for doubt that these latter-day Sikhs had travelled far away from the ideals of their Guru. The worship of the *Devi* had again become popular and it is quite conceivable that in this changed mental climate the Durga legend originated and gradually got current.

This is in effect what Kartar Singh says. He writes: "The alleged worship of Durga by the Guru, and all the stories based thereon, are mere fictions, inventions of clever, yet un-Sikhlike people, who desired either to justify their own degradation from the lofty principles proclaimed by the Gurus to please their idolatrous neighbours, or perhaps, to lend to the Guru's name a lustre which was in reality false, by showing to the Hindus that he could make the goddess show herself and grant his wishes."² However far-fetched or even fantastic such a view might appear at first sight, in the context of what has been said above, it strikes us, on the contrary, as quite a reasonable surmise. This view of the matter, moreover, receives considerable added strength from the negative evidence of the *Gur Sobha* of Saina Pat, one of the 52 bards whom the Guru kept in his employ and, as such, one of his closest associates. Saina Pat's account of the Guru's adventures during the pre-Khalsa period and of his reforms is, no doubt, scrappy in the extreme but he gives the salient facts and his silence with regard to the *hom* ceremony should, therefore, be regarded as significant—the more so, as next to the Guru's own works, the *Gur Sobha* is possibly the most important authority on Guru Gobind Singh. In fact, but for the limitations of negative evidence in general, this omission might even be regarded as decisive. Further, Macauliffe has drawn our attention to another very interesting point. The later chroniclers, who narrate this incident of the worship of *Devi*, say that it took place in the year 1698 on the hill of Naina Devi, near the Sutlej. But it seems that the Guru was at that time occupied

¹ Honighberger, *Thirty-five years in the East*, pp. 99-104, 106, 107.

² Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

otherwise. "On the fourteenth day of June of that year the Guru according to his own statement completed his translation of the Ram Avatar from Sanskrit into Hindi. He adds that it was completed at the base of the lofty Naina Devi on the margin of the Sutlej waters." Thus it appears that "the Guru, during the time the chroniclers state he was occupied in worshipping Durga, was in reality translating Sanskrit works in the seclusion and tranquillity of the mountain glades."¹

Finally, we come to the question as to whether there is any evidence in the Guru's writings as to any connection of his with the *Devi* cult. It should be made clear at the outset that the huge compilation that goes by the name of *Dasham Padshah Ka Granth* is not all the Guru's own but a substantial portion of it consists of the compositions of the bards whom the Guru kept in his employ. Now, the pieces that are relevant to the question in hand are *Chandi Charitar*, I and II, and the *Bhagauti-ki-War*. Of these only the last alone appears to be the Guru's own composition but, as Macauliffe points out, all three "are abridged translations of Durga Sapt Shati or seven hundred sloks on the subject of Durga,.....on the contests of the goddess Durga with the demons who had made war on the gods."² There has been some discussion with regard to the meaning of the word *Bhagauti* and also as to the implication of a couplet that occurs at the end of *Chandi Charitar II*. Some say that the word *Bhagauti* means the goddess Durga, while others say that it means the sword. It is stated in the couplet referred to above that those saints who continually meditate on Chandi would obtain salvation³ and find God as their reward, and the question has been raised as to whether this is to be regarded as the opinion of the Guru himself or merely of the bard who had composed it. But to us it seems that these points are, more or less irrelevant. The Guru writes:

"I do not at the outset propitiate Ganesh ;
I never meditate on Krishan or Vishnu ;

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 66, 67. See also p. 310.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³ *Ibid.*

I have heard of them but I know them not ;
It is only God's feet I love."¹

In spite of this we find, among the Guru's compositions, pieces extolling the deeds of Krishan and Ram. The Guru states: "I have rendered in the vulgar dialect the tenth chapter of the Bhagawat with no other object than to inspire ardour for religious warfare,"² and it is evident that the praises of Chandi were translated and popularised for a similar purpose. And Durga could never be an object of worship to the Guru, for he reiterates, again and again, that it was the Creator alone who should be worshipped and Durga had been created by the Creator for the destruction of the demons.³

We have stated above, we think fairly and squarely, the different views that obtain with regard to this very controversial question. We have already given our reasons for holding that the second view appears to us to be the weakest and it may be added here that it strikes us as extremely improbable that the Guru had gone through the severe expense and trouble that the ceremony entailed for a purpose that was wholly negative. The *hom* ceremony, therefore, had either not taken place at all, or if it had, it must have been during the earlier part of the Guru's career when he was a younger man, surrounded by Hindu influences, without and within,⁴ and when his object appears to have been to come to some sort of a lasting understanding with the Hill Rajas, who were all fanatical worshippers of the *Devi*. In the *Bachitra Natak* the Guru says:

"Thou turnest men like me from blades of grass into mountains ;
than Thou there is none other Cherisher of the poor.
O God, do Thou Thyself pardon mine errors ; there is none who
hath erred like me."⁵

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 310, 311.

² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴ As we have tried to show elsewhere, the difference between a Sikh and a Hindu was not as clear-cut and definite as it became after the inauguration of Guru Gobind Singh's reforms. Moreover, at least some of the bards whom the Guru kept in his employ were, as Macauliffe says, "tinctured with Hinduism". (*Ibid.*, p. 80).

⁵ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 287.

It may not be improbable that the Guru is here referring to the incident in question and the policy that he had pursued in his earlier life.

III. The Making of the Khalsa

Interesting though this controversy undoubtedly is, it has no relation to the Guru's reforms and is, in no way, vital for our comprehension of them. We may thus leave it safely to itself and pass on to a consideration of the measures that the Guru took to fulfil his mission. As we have hinted before, the Guru's problem was, on the one hand, to put an end to the process of distintegration which had become a feature of Sikhism since the closing years of the pontificate of Guru Hargobind and, on the other, to revitalise the Sikhs by giving them a new ideology and a new programme of action. Stated somewhat differently, the Guru's problem was that in course of its development Sikhism had acquired certain adjuncts which it could neither completely assimilate nor entirely discard. A purely religious movement had slowly acquired certain accretions which were distinctly political. External dangers and the character of the Sikhs themselves equally demanded further development. On the other hand, there was hopeless disintegration within. The future of Sikhism therefore depended on how these contradictory forces were united under the banner of a common ideal and how uniformity was secured within the system itself in order to assure the cohesion of the secular movement that was to be based upon it. The Guru's reforms were intended to secure this fundamental objective, and though some of his reforms are negative in their import and some pronouncedly positive, they are interconnected as a whole and were meant to lead, directly or indirectly, to the same result.

Though the Sikh chroniclers do not tell us definitely whether the Guru's prohibitions and innovations were introduced gradually or all at once, somehow we get the impression that the first question that the Guru tackled was that of the *masands*. These *masands*, together with the *Sangats*, formed the pivot of the organisation that Guru Arjan had created, and for several

decades had creditably served the cause of Sikhism. But the *masand* system could not continue long in proper order and even during the days of Guru Hargobind difficulties seem to have arisen. But the Guru was yet very powerful and it does not appear that the *masands* could go far in their recalcitrance. Soon, however, a new situation arose. "These collectors were at first chosen for their piety, integrity and high position, and were honorary officers. The office, however, soon became hereditary in the families of the first incumbents, and gradually falling into unworthy hands became an instrument of jobbery and oppression." It can be easily seen that a proper working of the *masand* system required, on the one hand, a strong, unchallenged central authority and, on the other, a set of pious and conscientious local workers. The disputes about the succession to the Guruship since the death of Hargobind led to a positive weakening of the Guru's position and prestige and the simultaneous existence of rival claimants gave the *masands* a ready excuse of misappropriating the offerings. Moreover, the *masands* themselves were more of a power than would, at first sight, appear. They were not merely the collectors of the Guru's dues but possessed episcopal functions as well. This enabled them to pose as persons of special sanctity and they gradually came to occupy the position of a sort of organised priesthood in Sikhism. "They gradually became very influential, in many cases independent of the Guru, and had their own followings." Thus it came about that the *masands*, who had been the foremost among the Guru's auxiliaries, became, in course of time, the greatest counterpoise to his authority.

The Sikh chroniclers give us many stories as to how finally Guru Gobind Singh became convinced of the utter perversity of the *masands* and determined to free his Sikhs from their tyranny. It is said that one day a company of mimes came to the Guru's court. The Guru asked them to imitate the *masands*. "One of them accordingly dressed as a *masand*, two as a *masand's* servants, and a fourth as a *masand's* courtesan riding behind him on horseback as he went to collect offerings for the Guru. The mimes portrayed to life the villainies and oppression practised by the

masands.” Again, we are told that a *masand* “billeted himself on a poor Sikh, and claimed sweets instead of the crushed pulse and unleavened bread which formed the staple food of his host. The *masand* took the bread, threw it into his host’s face, and dashed the crushed pulse on the ground. He then began to abuse the Sikh, and would not cease until the poor man had sold his wife’s petticoat to provide him with sweets.”¹ Various other incidents are narrated to show how the misappropriation of offerings had become almost a habit with the *masands* and to illustrate the subterfuges to which they resorted in order to gain their nefarious ends.² These stories may or may not be true, but the substantial truth behind them is testified to by the Guru himself. He writes:

“If any one go to the *masands*, they will tell him to bring all his property at once and give it to them.

If any one serve the *masands*, they will say, ‘Fetch and give us all thine offerings.’

‘Go at once and make a present to us of whatever property is in thy house.’

‘Think on us night and day, and mention not others even by mistake.’

They put oil into their eyes to make people believe that they are shedding tears.

If they see any of their own worshippers wealthy, they serve up sacred food and feed him with it.

If they see him without wealth, they give him nothing, though he beg for it; they will not even show him their faces.

Those beasts plunder men, and never sing the praises of the Supreme Being.”³

It is thus clear that the *masands* had degenerated into a disruptive force and a drastic remedy was needed.

But in spite of repeated complaints the Guru seems to have waited long before he took any decisive action against the *masands*. His hesitation is not difficult to understand, for the *masands* brought him his revenues and were the main channel of communication between himself and his followers. Any drastic

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 86.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 84-89. *Gur Bilas*, X.

³ Macauliffe, *ibid.*, pp. 322, 323.

interference with the *masands* was bound to put the whole Sikh organisation out of gear but even this supreme consideration could not deter the Guru indefinitely and at last he was roused to action. The *masands* were denounced and ex-communicated from within Sikhism. The story goes that his compassion for his followers was excited so much that "he had the *masands* all captured and brought to Anandpur where he destroyed them, to the number of 2,200, in boiling oil and by other torments."¹ This does not seem credible as the Guru had hardly the means of laying his hands on all *masands*, particularly on those of outlying districts, and it seems more probable that some of the *masands* were punished, some were pardoned² but the order was abolished for ever.

Closely connected with the suppression of the *masands* is the question of the dissentient sects, *viz.*, the *Minas*, the *Dhirmalias* and the *Ram Rayees*. The prophecy that Guru Amar Das is said to have made at the time when he made the Guruship hereditary in the family of his daughter, Bibi Bhani,³ was only too literally fulfilled. All of these sects, as we have already seen, owe their origin to contests for the Guruship. Prithia, as also Dhir Mal and Ram Rai after him, based their claim "mainly on the primitive theory that sanctity descended in the physical sense," and when all their efforts failed, they founded separate sects of their own. Now, the activities of these schismatics operated in a variety of ways to weaken Sikhism. Rejected by the Sikhs in general, these dissentients sought to gain their ends by enlisting the support of the Mughal Government and Government officials and were thus instrumental in creating a good deal of misunderstanding between the imperial authorities and the Sikh Gurus. Prithia allied himself with Sulahi Khan, a local revenue officer, complained to the *Chaudhris* of Amritsar, entered into a conspiracy with Chandu and even approached the Emperor. He was never inactive and gave Guru Arjan no rest. After his death his son, Mihrban, continued the intrigues and it has been

¹ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 72.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, 86. *Gur Bilas*, X.

³ See Vol. I of the present work, p. 221.

suggested that the dangerous situation, to which he had been pushed by the intrigues of his cousin, might have been one of the reasons that led Hargobind to grasp the sword. Similarly, when Ram Rai was set aside in favour of his younger brother Har Krishan, he began his intrigues and even sought the intercession of the Emperor. This proving fruitless he bided his time but even when on Guru Har Krishan's death his claims were again ignored and Tegh Bahadur "succeeded in being recognised as Guru by most of the Sikhs," he began his intrigues anew. His residence at Delhi and his ready access to the Emperor gave him ample opportunity and the Sikh records are unanimous in ascribing the earlier troubles of the ninth Guru to the machinations of Ram Rai as well as of Dhir Mal and the Sodhi Khatri. Secondly, the example of these claimants for the Guruship was not lost upon the other members of the *Sodhi* family and it has already been seen how on the death of Guru Har Krishan twenty-two of them simultaneously claimed the Guru's *gaddi*. Many of the *Sodhis* began to consider themselves as entitled to the services of the Sikhs in general and appointed their own *masands*. A great disruptive force was thus let loose on Sikhism, of which the *masands* were not slow to take the fullest advantage. The greed of these aspirants after the Guruship and the recalcitrance of the *masands* fed each other and soon brought the entire movement to the brink of disaster. It was, therefore, just in the fitness of things that when denouncing the *masands* the Guru also denounced the *Minas*, the *Dhirmalias* and the *Ram Rayees*. The Sikhs were solemnly prohibited from having any social intercourse "with the descendants or followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal, Ram Rai, or *masands*, who had fallen away from the tenets and principles of Guru Nanak."¹

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 96.

It is said that the Guru denounced five bodies of men but there is some difference as to who these five were. Some add to the four, mentioned in the text, the *Kurimars* or those who destroyed girl infants, while others take the *Minas* and the *Dhirmalias* together and add the *Bhaddanis* or those who shaved their children's heads. As there is no historical reason as to why the Guru would denounce the *Kurimars* or the *Bhaddanis* it seems to us almost certain that these names were added later to make up the number 5, which has a mystical significance in Sikhism. (Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 696, f.n. 1 ; p. 697).

This was the most important of the measures that the Guru adopted to root out the evils that had made the history of Sikhism, since the death of Guru Hargobind, a story of progressive disintegration. But this, by itself, would not have meant much if he had not, at the same time, taken steps to "awaken his followers to a new life" and provide for a new integration. On the 1st of Baisakh, *Samvat* 1756 (middle of April, 1699), the Guru is said to have convened a great open air gathering at Keshgarh where he invited all his Sikhs to attend. When all had been seated, the Guru stood up and asked whether there was any among them who was ready to lay down his life for him. There was deep silence for some time and at last one Dayaram came forward. The Guru took him inside a tent which had been put up on the spot the previous night, killed one of the five goats which had already been put in store within the tent, came out and showed the dripping weapon to the multitude. He then asked for another man; there was again silence all round and when the Guru had repeated his request for the third time, Dharm Das came forward to sacrifice himself for his Guru. He too was taken inside the enclosure, was seated by the side of Dayaram and another goat was killed. The Guru then again came out with an angry and fierce mien and loudly called for another sacrifice. At this something like consternation spread among the Sikhs who had assembled there; they began to doubt the Guru's sanity and thought that he was no longer responsible for his actions. Some fled, some went to the Guru's mother to complain but he could not be shaken from his purpose. At last, Muhakam Chand offered himself to the Guru and was similarly taken inside the tent. This was repeated two times more and the Guru secured two other Sikhs, Sahib Chand and Himmat, who were ready to lay down their lives for him.¹ With these "Five Beloved,"² as they came to be called, the Guru proceeded to lay anew the foundation of Sikhism.

The Guru is said to have attired the "Five Beloved" in

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 91-93. *Gur Bilas*, XI.

² The Guru himself is said to have bestowed the name of '*Panch Piyare*' to these five.

splendid raiment and then initiated them according to the new rites that he now introduced. The method of initiation, which Guru Nanak had introduced and which had hitherto been current in Sikhism, was known as *charanpahul*. "In its inception the rite consisted of washing a toe of the Guru in a basin of water which was then drunk by the initiate who had to spend some time as a novice in the service of the Guru of his order and attain a certain degree of self-abnegation." It is further stated that "the initiate also drank water touched by the foot of other devout Sikhs, whatever their original castes, so that all pride of caste was destroyed. In the time of Guru Arjan the water was not touched by the Guru's toe, but simply placed under the *manja* or *masnad* of the Guru."¹ It is patent that the ideal behind this rite was that of humility and surrender but, as the Guru's view was that this ideal no longer suited the Sikhs, he considerably elaborated the rite and changed its entire spirit. The Guru took some water in an iron vessel, stirred it with a double-edged dagger, and then "repeated over it the sacred verses that he had appointed for the ceremony."² The "Five Beloved" were asked "to repeat '*Wahguru*' and the preamble of the *Japji*. "He then gave them five palmfuls of the *amrit*³ to drink. He sprinkled it five times on their hair and their eyes, and caused them all to repeat '*Wahguru ji ka Khalsa, Wahguru ji ka Fatah.*' On this he gave them all the appellation of Singhs or lions." The most significant thing to notice here is the substitution of the double-edged dagger in place of the Guru's toe and the meaning is quite clear. The old ideal of humility and surrender was being changed into a new one of self-assertion and self-reliance. But the most remarkable

¹ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 696, f.n. 2.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 94. These verses were the *Japji* (of Guru Nanak), the *Japji* (of Guru Gobind Singh), Guru Amar Das's *Anand*, and certain *Sawaiyas* or quatrains of his own composition.

³ The consecrated water used in *pahul* is so called. *Amrit* means nectar and *amrit chhakna* or to drink nectar means to get initiation by *pahul*. It should be stated here that according to Sikh tradition Mata Jito, the Guru's wife, went out of curiosity to the place where the Guru was about to initiate the "Five Beloved" with some country-sugar puffed cakes called *patashas*. The Guru asked her to throw the sweets into the holy water and the practice has since been continued.

episode in this connection came when the Guru stood up in an attitude of supplication and with folded hands prayed to the "Five Beloved" to initiate him in exactly the same manner in which he had initiated them. The astonishment of the "Five Beloved" at this proposal of the Guru knew no bounds as they failed utterly to understand the meaning of such a request from a man whom they all regarded as God's vicar on earth. But their doubts vanished when the Guru told them that the new method of initiation had been introduced under the direct order of the Lord. "They who accept it shall henceforth be known as the Khalsa. The Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa. There is no difference between you and me. As Guru Nanak seated Guru Angad on the throne, so have I made you also a Guru." Thereafter, the "Five Beloved" initiated the Guru according to the new rites¹ and the principle was established that any five Sikhs could represent the Khalsa and give initiation to a novice. The Guru thus merged himself in the Khalsa and the whole sect was invested with the dignity of Gurudom.

According to the newswriter of the period the Guru is reported to have said: "Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules for their guidance, abandon them all, adopt the one form of adoration and become brothers. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another."² It thus appears that the Guru's object was to obliterate all distinctions of caste and creed and weld his followers into one homogeneous whole. Cunningham says: "It may nevertheless be justly observed that Gobind abolished *caste* rather by implication than by a direct enactment;"³ but the implication is so clear that there can hardly be any room for doubt. As the outward and visible sign of initiation by *pahul* the Sikhs were enjoined to wear the five K's, *viz.*, the *kes* or

¹ It was now that Guru Gobind Rai became Guru Gobind Singh but to avoid confusion we have throughout used the latter name.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 93, 94.

³ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

long hair, *kachh* or short breeches, the *kara* or iron bangle, the *kripan* or sword, and the *kangha* or comb. They were given the common cognomen of Singh and they were directed to regard themselves as sons of Guru Gobind Singh and Sahib Kaur and as inhabitants of the city of Anandpur. Their watchwords must be "Kritnash, Kulnash, Dharmnash, Karmnash, the forsaking of occupation and family, belief and ceremonies."¹ And, as we have seen, they were to be all equal, and any five of them might act as a Guru to a novice. It will thus be seen that the Guru struck at the root of all sorts of prejudices and in the society that he contemplated caste and tribal distinctions were entirely out of place. And further, as Cunningham says, "Gobind took away from his followers each ancient solace of superstition." All beliefs, rituals or ceremonies that implied the recognition of anything but the One True Lord were categorically rejected. As the Guru says:

"He who repeateth night and day the name of Him whose enduring light is unquenchable, who bestoweth not a thought on any but the one God ;
 Who hath full love and confidence in God, who putteth not faith even by mistake in fasting, or *worshipping* cemeteries, places of cremation, or Jogis' places of sepulture ;
 Who only recognizeth the one God and not pilgrimages, alms, the non-destruction of life, *Hindu* penance, or austerities ;
 And in whose heart the light of the Perfect One shineth, he is recognized as a pure *member of the Khalsa*."²

The Guru thus aimed at creating a compact brotherhood in faith, which was also to be a brotherhood in arms. The Guru's reliance, as we have seen, was on the sword and he sought to exalt military prowess in all possible ways. He had changed his Sikhs into Singhs or warriors and "he withdrew his followers from that undivided attention which their fathers had given to the plough, the loom and the pen, and he urged them to regard the sword as *their* principal stay in this world." The sentiment of veneration for that which gives us power, our safety, or our daily

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 71. It may be added here that the Guru had also prohibited the use of tobacco.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 314, 315.

bread is common in human history and the Sword became an object of worship with the Sikhs, God himself being given the name of "All-Steel." "Those who were devout in the worship of the Sword were promised exemption from every other kind of religious rites or ceremonies," and he was to be regarded as of the Khalsa, "who combats in the van, who mounts the war horse, who is ever waging battle and who is continually armed,"¹ and "whoever desired to abide in the Khalsa should not fear the clash of arms, and be ever ready for the combat and the defence of his faith."² The Guru says:

"I am the son of a brave man, not of a Brahman ;
How can I perform austerities ?
How can I turn my attention to Thee, O Lord, and forsake
domestic affairs ?
Now be pleased to grant me the boon I crave with clasped hands,
That when the end of my life cometh, I may die fighting in a
mighty battle."³

The Guru's preferences are thus stated in the clearest of terms; the Name, no doubt, was still to remain the chief object of adoration but "blest is his life in this world who repeateth God's name with his mouth and meditateth war in his heart."⁴ Thus in the Khalsa that the Guru created soldierly qualities were given the foremost place and though, no doubt, its members were asked to depend on God as well, it practically amounted to a dependence on the Sword, because, as we have seen, they had been taught, at the same time, to regard the Sword as God and God as the Sword.

To the Almighty the Guru prays:

"All-Steel, I am Thy slave.
Deeming me Thine own, preserve me ;
Think of mine honour, whose arm Thou has taken.
Deeming me Thine own, cherish me,
Single out and destroy mine enemies.
May both my kitchen and my sword prevail in the world."⁵

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 375, 376.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 223.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

The Guru's primary concern was thus with his kitchen and his sword, the one—the emblem of service to assist the weak, the helpless and the oppressed, and the other—the emblem of power to extirpate the tyrants, and the Khalsa was the instrument that he created to achieve this two-fold purpose. It is interesting to note that though in the later works it is sometimes said that the Guru's motives were frankly political, in his own writings we scarcely hear anything of dominion or sovereignty. On the contrary, in the *Bachitra Natak* the Guru writes:

“The successors of both Baba Nanak and Babar
Were created by God Himself.
Recognize the former as a spiritual,
And the latter as a temporal King.”¹

In his letter to Aurangzib the Guru says: “Thou art proud of thy empire, while I am proud of the empire of the immortal God.”² Nor will it possibly be true to say that he “swore eternal war with the haughty and cruel Muhammadans.” His war was with tyranny and oppression and the quarrel with the Muhammadans and the achievement of political dominion by the Sikhs followed as, more or less, inevitable corollaries of this basic conception.

The introduction of *pahul* and the simultaneous abolition of the pontifical Guruship formed the cornerstone of the edifice built by Guru Gobind Singh. Militarism was now adopted finally as an article of creed and the leadership of the community was left to the community itself, thus bringing into existence a military commonwealth with the fullest of democratic freedom. It is important to remember that the peculiar Sikh conception of the Guruship which studiously kept the personality of the Guru apart from its spirit³ made this possible. When Guru Gobind Singh said that the Guru was the Khalsa and the Khalsa was the Guru he was merely adding one more to the several equations to which the Guruship had already been submitted and though the change was, no doubt, revolutionary in some of its

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 305.

² *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³ See Vol. I of this work, pp. 233-236.

consequences, no revolutionary effort was required to achieve it. In one form or other the Sikhs were already familiar with the idea and the vesting of the spiritual leadership of the community in the *Guru Granth Sahib* and of the temporal leadership in the Khalsa itself was the culmination of a process that had long commenced in Sikhism.

On the other hand, the entire outlook of the community was now transformed inasmuch as it no longer represented an humble attempt to live what it considered to be the true life and propagate by peaceful means what it regarded as the true faith but henceforward it took upon its shoulders the responsibility of combating all sorts of tyranny and oppression with means adequate for the purpose. The Guru had declared that in the circumstances of the time a mere negative policy of the type of passive resistance was unsuitable and consequently his chief reliance was on the prowess of arms. With love and devotion he grasped the sword, "the subduer of countries and the destroyer of the armies of the wicked." The Guru's conception of the Khalsa, therefore, was a fully democratic compact community, armed to the teeth, struggling to maintain what it conceived to be the right path and fighting incessantly and without compunction tyranny and injustice in all their forms.

But though the ideology was new, the structure was built on the old and many of the ideas associated with the Khalsa had developed long back in Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh made any five Sikhs competent to represent the Khalsa and the Sikhs were taught to believe that wherever five Sikhs would assemble the Guru would also be among them, but we had already read in Bhai Gurdas that "where there are five Sikhs, there is God."¹ Gobind invested the Khalsa with the Guruship and said that there was no difference between him and the members of the Khalsa but it has been seen how earlier in the history of Sikhism the individual Sikh had been exalted to a position almost equal to that of the Guru himself² and how the ideal played an active part in the every day life of the Sikhs. Gobind made the Sikhs

¹ See Vol. I of this work, p. 246.

² *Ibid.*, p. 247.

independent of a supreme guide and the brotherhood took the place of the Guru but it has already been pointed out that, even when the Guru was supreme and unqualified surrender to him was the law in Sikhism, the will of the brotherhood always exercised a vital influence in the decision of important questions¹ and the testimony of Mohsin Fani proves that this democratic idea had developed long ago in Sikhism. Gobind exalted military life above everything else; but ever since the days of Hargobind military ideals had been associated with Sikhism and could never be entirely abandoned. But these ideas, which had grown with the progress of Sikhism and had been existing side by side without any apparent coherence, were now synthesised in a new concordance and made to flow in one single channel. All that the Sikhs held dear, all that they had been taught to revere, love of God, obedience and service to the Guru, and love for each other, were to be satisfied by serving the Khalsa, wherein were now embodied all their social and religious aspirations.

The newswriter, already referred to, says that as a result of the Guru's exhortation to forget caste and tribe the Brahmans and the Khattris left the meeting but "about twenty thousand men stood up and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission."² The Guru thus "made himself the master of the imagination of his followers," and they came to believe that the Khalsa was under the direct protection of the Lord. "Lord's is the Khalsa, Lord's be the victory" became their watchword. "A strong conviction of one's being the chosen instrument of God, and the confidence it inspires, are the strongest guarantees of success, and the Guru had given these guarantees to his followers." On the other hand, "many Brahman and Kshattriya followers murmured but the contemned races rejoiced." Campbell remarks: "It is curious that, intimately connected as the Khattris always have been and still are with the Sikh religion, only 9 per cent. of them should belong to it," and "a Khatri, when a Sikh, is ordinarily a Sikh of Nanak,

¹ See Vol. I of this work, p. 247.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 94.

rather than a devotee of Guru Govind.”¹ The reason for this is plain; as a Sikh of Nanak “the Khatri could avoid the necessity of completely abnegating his caste principles” which the acceptance of Guru Gobind Singh’s new dispensation made impossible. Most of the Khatri thus left the fold of the Khalsa, thereby leaving also the leadership of the movement, which had hitherto been theirs, to the Jats. But down below it was just the other way about and the most eloquent testimony to the Guru’s work is provided by the Rangretas, otherwise known as the Mazhabi Sikhs. Originally they were Chupras and belonged to the scavenger class and Mazhabi means nothing more than a member of that class converted to Sikhism. The tradition is that some members of this class brought back the mutilated body of Guru Tegh Bahadur from Delhi and as a reward for their devotion were admitted to Sikhism by Guru Gobind Singh. In due course they got the *pahul* and they seem to have fully justified the Guru’s assertion that “those who accept the nectar of the *pahul* shall be changed before your very eyes from jackals into lions.” The magic touch of the Guru’s wand transformed the members of this despised class into efficient soldiers and we are told that one of the bravest of the Guru’s generals was a Mazhabi named Jiwan Singh, who fell at Chamkaur and whose tomb is still shown there.²

Cunningham writes: “The last apostle of the Sikhs effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty though fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that

¹ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 507.

² Rose, *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 76. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 71. f.n. 4.

“These Mazhabis in the past have proved themselves, and are at the present time, extremely good soldiers. The Pioneer Regiments into which they are recruited have a proved record of service in many campaigns.” It appears, however, that during the period of Khalsa ascendancy the Mazhabis found that “the equality their religion promised them existed in theory rather than in fact. They occupied much the same position among the Jat and Khalsa descended Sikhs as their ancestors, the Sweepers, enjoyed among Hindus.” Maharaja Ranjit Singh, we are told, had a great admiration for their bravery and enlisted them freely. “Being afraid, however, to form them into separate corps, he attached a company to various battalions.”

purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak.”¹ On the other hand, we are told that “Guru Gobind organised the Sikhs to suit a special purpose. He called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flow in one particular channel only; they ceased to be full, free men. He converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a means of worldly success; he dwarfed the unity of a religious sect into an instrument of political advancement. Hence the Sikhs, who had been advancing for centuries to be true men, suddenly stopped short and became mere *soldiers*.”² We are thus introduced to a question, which has been a matter of some controversy, the question as to whether the Khalsa arose logically and naturally out of the foundations laid by Guru Nanak and his immediate successors, or it was a superimposition which utilised the foundations for an entirely different purpose. At first sight it may seem that the religion of Guru Nanak and that which Guru Gobind Singh preached were radically different. Nanak had preached “love of mankind”; Gobind preached “punishment of the wicked.” Nanak’s ideal had been to remain ever absorbed in the love of God and drink the nectar of the Name; Gobind called upon his Singhs to sing God’s name in the mouth but to meditate war in heart and for “the nectar of the Name” he seems to have substituted “the nectar of pahul.” Nanak’s motto had been “humility and prayer”; Gobind’s “self-assertion and extirpation of tyrants.” Nanak had aimed at spiritual freedom, while Gobind emphasised political advancement and military glory. But such a superficial comparison ignores some of the basic facts of the situation and the actual forces at work and its untenability becomes apparent when the position is reviewed a bit more closely.

Man, no doubt, is a social animal but in the deeper layers of his being he is severely alone and religion is primarily concerned with this latter aspect of man. Consequently, religion, in its truest sense, is more individualistic than social in character

¹Cunningham, *ibid.*, p. 84.

²Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 301, 302. The idea is Tagore’s, but it is Sarkar who brought it into the domain of history.

but as a group is formed and slowly evolves, outer institutions also come into existence which are mainly designed to create an atmosphere which the individual may find congenial for his progress in the spiritual path. Of these two sides, one is, more or less, static, where we are concerned with certain fundamental enunciations and certain fundamental disciplines. The other is bound to change as the objective situation changes from time to time, calling for new adjustments. So far as the group is concerned, a religion becomes ineffective when it fails to respond to the demands of the time and its inner spirit is submerged by its outworn institutions.

Now, it would certainly be going too far to say that Guru Gobind Singh had, in any way, given up the essentials of Guru Nanak's teaching, which formed, as it were, the core of Sikhism. We find in his teaching, as in that of Guru Nanak, the same insistence on the worship of the One True Lord, the same idealisation of devotion and surrender, and the same glorification of the Name. The Guru writes:

"O mortal, touch the feet of the Supreme Being.
Why sleepest thou the sleep of worldly love?
Ever lay up the remembrance of God ; renounce and flee from
mortal sin.
If thou desire ever to have happiness of every kind, be absorbed
in God's love.
O *man*, worship none but God, not a thing made by Him.
Know that He who was in the beginning, unborn, invincible,
and indestructible is God."¹

And again:

"Without the support of the One Name
Deem all religious ceremonies as superstition.
Repeat God's name, establish God's name *in thy heart* :
Do penance unto God and repeat His name."²

Guru Gobind Singh admonishes his followers to consider their houses altogether as the forest and remain anchorites at heart, to eat little, to sleep little and to love mercy and forbearance, to practise mildness and patience and not to attach themselves to lust, wrath, covetousness and worldly love if they wanted to

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 324, 325.

² *Ibid.*, p. 269.

behold the Real Soul of this world and obtain the Supreme Being.¹ And he warns them that no amount of political or military power could save them if they lacked the fundamental requisites of divine knowledge and devotion.²

All this is in the old Sikh spirit and enshrines the essence of the teaching. At the same time it would be idle to deny that in the Khalsa we breathe a new spirit. This has already been explained in detail and it would be enough to point out here that it is marked by the clear assumption of a more positive role in human affairs. Those who call this a "dwarfing of the unity of a religious sect into an instrument of political advancement" commit themselves, at the same time, to the absurd proposition that military efficiency or political freedom is inconsistent with a true religious life. A leader cannot write on a clean slate and has to act within the framework of facts presented by a given situation. As we have seen, by the time Guru Gobind Singh ascended the *gaddi* the unity of the Sikhs had become a thing of the past and new forces were pressing for recognition. Of these the most important was the traditional character of the overwhelming majority of the Sikhs, *viz.*, the Jats, whose love of freedom and warlike spirit could no longer be denied a place within the system. As in adopting the dominant Christian faith the Goths and Vandals contributed largely to the process of change that had already set in; as in adopting the dominant Buddhist faith the Scythians and the Kushan Tartars made similar contributions; so, in entering the ranks of Sikhism in ever swelling numbers during the days of Arjan and Hargobind, the Jats also largely contributed to the process of change that had already commenced. Guru Gobind Singh registered this change and, at the same time, synthesised it with all that was best in the old tradition, thus assuring a new lease of life to the movement. The well-known saying, "Scratch the Sikh and you will find the Jat," seems to suggest that in him there is only a veneer of Sikhism and the substratum is all Jat but it would be a futile pursuit to try to determine the respective degrees. The fact remains that the

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 324.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 272.

Khalsa was a compound of the Sikh and the Jat; the Guru had united the religious fervour of the Sikh with the warlike temper of the Jat. It should be noted, however, that after this new synthesis Sikhism became more uncompromising and consequently more sectarian in character. The Sikhs were reorganised within the tightest of limits and this was the inevitable reaction of the hostile environment in which the Guru and his followers found themselves. This fact apparently lends some support to the view that the free and untrammelled growth of the Sikhs was thereby arrested but it was in the logic of events and could not be otherwise.

CHAPTER V

GURU GOBIND SINGH—THE LAST PHASE

I. The Guru Leaves Anandpur

The immediate effect of the coming of the Khalsa¹ was to spread something like consternation among the Hill chiefs, who now found their position most seriously threatened. After the miscarriage of their revolt against the Mughal Government and their severe punishment, they were returning to the way of their forefathers, which, they now recognised, was the very best for them, when suddenly the Khalsa came upon them like a bomb-shell. It is true that the Guru did not want a quarrel with them but, as we have seen, his differences with these chiefs were, more or less, fundamental and these were now considerably accentuated by the Guru's reforms. After the introduction of *pahul* one of the first acts of the Guru was to send agents to different places in order to initiate the Sikhs according to the new rites and to spread the message of the new dispensation far and wide. Band after band of enthusiastic followers came to have the Guru's *darshan* and the Hill chiefs saw before their very eyes what a powerful crowd was gathering amidst them. They regarded the Guru as virtually an intruder, whose continued presence in their midst was a standing menace to their princely order, and it is not at all surprising that they became seriously alarmed when they saw this phenomenal increase in the Guru's power and this new enthusiasm among the Guru's followers. We are told that the Raja of Kahlur, who was the most directly concerned as Anandpur was situated within his territory, sought the advice

¹ "This word comes from the Arabic *Khalis* pure, and was applied by Guru Gobind Singh to the Sikhs who accepted the baptism of the sword." (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 95, f.n. 1). On the other hand, it is stated in the *Hakikat* that the whole nation was called by the name of Khalsa because "when the order of the Faujdar, 'you leave the Khalsa Sharifah,' came, they decided: 'we are the Khalsah'." (*Indian Historical Quarterly*, March, 1942).

of the Raja of Handur and it was decided that a messenger should be sent to the Guru with a letter demanding that the Guru should either relinquish the land he was occupying or pay rent for it. The Guru's reply was that proper price for the land had been paid by his father and that, as no rent had been paid in the past, none would be paid now. Thus began the quarrel that embittered the remaining years of the Guru's life and ended in catastrophic consequences.

The Sikh records give us the impression that the war, that now commenced, was forced upon the Guru, who had no desire of running into hostilities and was, on the contrary, eager for an understanding with the Hill chiefs. In a sense this is true but it should be noted here that besides the fundamental differences already referred to, the Hill chiefs had another very serious grievance against the Guru and the Kahlur chief in particular saw the integrity of his dominion seriously threatened. The Guru had no possessions which he might call his own besides Anandpur and its suburbs and his main dependence was on the contributions of his followers. These, however, rarely came in the shape of essential supplies and, as the Guru's followers daily increased, the problem of supply became more and more acute. The hill people had hardly any surplus and the Sikhs, therefore, were very often driven to the necessity of taking supplies by force. The Sikh records themselves show that this was done again and again, though, possibly, sometimes payment was made at the current rates.¹ Thus this pressing need of the Sikhs, combined with the marauding instinct which, as we have seen, was inherent in their character, soon brought about a state of affairs which the Hill chiefs could, by no means, ignore. Chiefly at the instance of the Raja of Kahlur a combination was formed against the Guru and the allied army took up its position at a place just outside Anandpur. The Guru, on his part, had already notified his followers that a battle was imminent and many had come and joined his ranks. Instead of resorting to a frontal attack the Hill forces were ordered to surround Anandpur and stop all ingress and egress. But this position the Guru was in

¹ *Gur Bilas*, xiii, 8, 9. *Gur Sobha*, viii, 40 ; ix, 1, 8 ; xi, 5, 6.

no mood to tolerate and his son Ajit Singh soon organised an attack and fell upon the Hill troops. The battle lasted for several days and Ajit Singh, though a lad of about 14, performed prodigies of valour. When the Hill chiefs saw that victory was slipping off their hands they held a consultation among themselves and at last decided to resort to a stratagem. They brought a cow and took an oath on it that they would be friends with the Guru if he would only leave Anandpur for a while and come back later on. Apparently this proposal was made by the chiefs so that they might save their faces and lend something of the colour of victory to their inevitable defeat but the Guru, who was always opposed to unnecessary warfare, readily agreed to comply with the request and proceeded to Nirmoh, a village situated about a mile from Kiratpur. Thus a certain amount of vagueness is introduced towards the end of the narrative which is otherwise plain enough and we are left in some doubt as to how really the first battle of Anandpur ended.¹

It seems clear, however, that the truce was a truce only in name, for while the Guru rested himself at Nirmoh his troops were let loose on the villages of Kahlur and many of them were plundered. Naturally, there were skirmishes here and there and

¹ For the post-Khalsa period of the Guru's life the only reliable authority is the *Gur Sobha* and we have based our account mainly on it. As with regard to the pre-Khalsa period we depended mainly on the *Bachitra Natak* and the later records were brought in only when they seemed to throw light on some involved or disputed point or when they seemed to elucidate the rather cryptic and scrappy narrative of the Guru, so here also we have used them mainly for a similar purpose. Therefore in our narrative several incidents that are given in the later Sikh records find no place. For instance, it is said that the quarrel with the Hill chiefs began in the following manner: one day the Guru had gone to the Dun on a hunting excursion; two Hill chiefs, named Balia Chand and Alim Chand, resolved to surprise him. A fight ensued in which the two Rajas were worsted, Balia Chand being killed and Alim Chand leaving the field with the loss of an arm. After this defeat the Hill chiefs thought that it would be suicidal to allow the Guru to increase in power and forthwith applied to the Delhi Government for help. Two generals, Din Beg and Painsa Khan, both commanding divisions of five thousand men, were sent against the Guru but were beaten back. After this the combined army of the Hill chiefs attacked the Guru and the first battle of Anandpur began. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 120, 124, 125).

in one of these Sahib Chand was killed. This Sahib Chand appears to have been one of the heroes of the battle of Bhangani and had been in the front rank among the Guru's followers. A fierce battle ensued over his body which ended in a victory for the Khalsa, who then took the corpse of Sahib Chand to Nirmoh and had it duly cremated. The plundering of the villages continued and soon things came to such a pass that many people left their homes and retired to the forest for safety. Thus, when the Kahlur chief saw that he was unable to give protection to his subjects and save them from the oppression of the Khalsa, he decided to enlist the assistance of the Mughal Government and sent an envoy for the purpose. It is not quite clear to whom the envoy was sent but it seems probable that the *Subahdar* of Lahore was first approached and he sent the envoy to the Emperor's Viceroy at Delhi, the Emperor himself being absent in the Deccan. The representation of the Kahlur chief being duly laid there, the *Subahdar* of Lahore and the *Subahdar* of Sarhind were ordered to march against Guru Gobind Singh. The two armies united at Sarhind and then made a combined move against the Guru. Already apprised of these developments the Guru also made preparations to meet the attack and persons who came for *darshan* were detained for participation in the coming battle. The Mughals attacked from one side and the Raja of Kahlur from another and a fierce combat ensued. The battle lasted for about a whole day and night and at last the Muhammadans were compelled to retire. The Guru also decided to leave Nirmoh but when he had just crossed the adjoining river, he was again attacked by the Muhammadans and another battle was fought on the bank of the river. This time, too, the Guru came out victorious and the Muhammadans were put to flight.

When the battle of Nirmoh thus terminated in a victory for the Guru, the Raja of Basali came to him and invited him to his place. The Guru accepted the invitation and stayed at Basali for some time. There, too, the Raja of Kahlur attacked him again but the Guru had not much difficulty in beating the Raja back. After this battle, which is known as the battle of Basali, the Guru rested himself for some time and on occasions enjoyed

himself by going out on hunting expeditions. On one such expedition, which took place near about the village of Kalmot, a party among the Guru's followers were suddenly surrounded by the villagers, who then proceeded to attack them. When the Guru was informed of this he ordered the Khalsa to surround, in their turn, the villagers of Kalmot and a very sanguinary contest ensued. But the villagers were no match for the Guru's followers and they were very soon compelled to submit. The Raja of Kahlur seems to have been completely unnerved by these repeated successes of the Guru and he now came forward with proposals of peace. An agreement was come to and the Guru returned to Anandpur, where he now built the fortress of Anandgarh.

The Sikhs now brought the villages round about Anandpur under their own control and for a time, at least, the very difficult question of supplies appears to have been solved. The Sikhs came and went and the Guru's *darbar* daily increased in prosperity and splendour. Two years and some days passed in this manner when again the old sore reappeared. The Khalsa horsemen again began to fall upon villagers and levy contributions by force. Those who paid forthwith were not troubled further but those who delayed or refused were looted. The plain truth was thus brought home to the Hill chiefs that they could have no peace and security till the Guru was expelled from Anandpur. Evidently the villages around Anandpur had been ceded to the Guru by the Raja of Kahlur as a part of the agreement already referred to, and this, as we have seen, had ensured peace for two years. The Guru and the Hill Rajas apparently lived on friendly terms and the Mughals had no reason to interfere. But with the gradual increase of the Guru's power and the number of his followers, he could not go on without a further expansion of territory and the old troubles reappeared. Fresh hostilities became inevitable and the Hill chiefs arranged a formidable combination against the Guru. An ultimatum was sent to the effect that the Guru must forthwith evacuate the fort of Anandgarh and the Guru's silent reply was to strengthen his defence. Thereupon Anandpur was attacked and another battle ensued. But

the Hill chiefs, with their own unaided strength, again proved unequal to the task and the Guru had not much difficulty in beating the combination back.

But the Hill Rajas were finally resolved not to tolerate this state of affairs any longer and they almost at once busied themselves in bringing about a much mightier alliance against the Guru. They again applied to the Mughal authorities and troops were sent to their assistance both from Sarhind and Lahore. At the same time their own resources were more fully requisitioned and the Gujars and Ranghars, "who were at ancient enmity with the Sikhs," were brought in to join the war against the Guru. On the other side, the Guru ordered trenches to be prepared and with a cool resolve awaited the attack. The allies soon fell on Anandpur and a fierce battle ensued. With heavy casualties on both sides the battle continued for some time till at last the Khalsa soldiers led a counter attack and drove the allies away from Anandpur. The Hill Rajas and the Muhammadans retreated to a place away from Kahlur and held consultations to reconsider their plan of action. They soon came back, surrounded the Sikhs on all sides and the great siege of Anandpur began.

The siege was organised in such a perfect manner that all ingress and egress for both goods and persons were completely stopped and after a few days the Sikhs began to feel the desperation of their position. The price of foodgrains rose to one rupee per seer and at this price also grains were not always available. There was also some difficulty with regard to water and we are told that sometimes four Sikhs would come out, two would fight and the other two would take water in. But the food position soon became extremely serious and the Sikhs were driven to some dangerous expedients in order to relieve it. At dead of night bands of Sikhs began to fall on those places where the allies had kept their stores and bring some provisions to the beleaguered town. In this manner the situation was eased to some extent but this could not continue long as the allies collected all their stores together in one particular place and effectively guarded it night and day. Thus the position again became desperate and the Sikhs saw that there was no other alternative but a direct

assault on the besiegers. An attack was therefore made but though the Sikhs fought with great bravery they were soon surrounded and overpowered. When this was brought to the notice of the Guru he said that the Sikhs should not have gone out like this without orders. But the situation grew worse and worse, and after some days of extreme hardship the Sikhs again laid their grievances before the Guru. They were asked to bear it up a few days more, after which, the Guru assured them, the position would improve and the Sikhs would get food in abundance. Again a few days passed during which the Sikhs somehow carried on with the scanty rations that were distributed from the Guru's stores. Even a few assaults on the enemy were carried out but the Sikhs soon wore down under the tremendous ordeal and clamoured before the Guru that the only practicable course left was to leave Anandpur. The Guru said that if the result of the abandonment of Anandpur proved to be ruinous the responsibility would be theirs. He made them sign a declaration to that effect and then gave orders for the evacuation of Anandpur. The Guru distributed his treasures among the Sikhs, each of whom made a bundle and put it on his head. They were also given arms of various kinds and, when everything was ready, whatever could not be carried was put on fire and the Guru with his party left Anandpur.¹

This is the account that Saina Pat gives of what he calls the second battle of Anandgarh. From this account, however, it is not clear how it became possible for the Guru and his Sikhs to leave Anandpur in the face of the hostile army that sat tight around it. Saina Pat does not speak of any action for a break through and it appears from his account that no obstacles were put in his path when the Guru left Anandpur with his companions. It was only when he had gone some distance that the Hill chiefs and the Muhammadans again came upon him and the battle of Chamkaur ensued. It thus seems almost certain that the two parties had come to some arrangement with regard to the evacuation of Anandpur and we think that we can, by no means, ignore what the later chronicles tell us in this connection. The story

¹ *Gur Sobha*, xi.

has many ramifications and is developed in great detail but the point that is relevant for our purposes here is that both the Hill chiefs and the Muhammadan generals are said to have taken solemn oaths, the former on the cow and the *salagram* and the latter on the Koran, "of safe conduct for the Guru should he evacuate Anandpur."¹ These oaths appear to have been most wantonly violated and to this we have poignant references in the *Zafarnama*.² In fact, Saina Pat himself refers to violation of oath by the imperial officers in connection with Daya Singh's mission to Aurangzib.³ We may take it, therefore, that some agreement had been come to with regard to the evacuation of Anandpur by the Guru and his Sikhs and that it had been treacherously violated by the allies.

It is also not very clear from Saina Pat's account as to why the Guru got the declaration signed by the Sikhs on the eve of his abandonment of Anandpur. The matter is stated somewhat differently, and we think more logically, in the later Sikh records. We are told that the Guru was all throughout opposed to the evacuation of Anandpur as he was convinced that no trust could be placed on the promises of the Muhammadans and the Hill chiefs. But the hardships of the siege had become so unbearable that the Sikhs began to clamour for the acceptance of the allied terms and in this they were joined by the Guru's mother and some of his other relations. But still the Guru would not agree and when the impatience of the Sikhs rose to what almost amounted to recalcitrance, he asked them to renounce their Guru and their faith and do as they liked. This was possibly the last desperate step that the Guru took to dissuade them but, after some hesitation, most of the Sikhs wrote letters of renunciation and left the Guru. We are further told that some of these repented afterwards and came unexpectedly to the Guru's assistance at the battle of Khidrana. All of them died there and the

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 184.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 204.

³ *Gur Sobha*, xiii, 33.

Guru, at the dying request of Mahan Singh, cancelled the letter of renunciation.¹

II. Chamkaur and After

Be that as it may, with his ranks sorely depleted, the Guru proceeded and, after sometime, took up his position on an eminence which he found on the way. But soon news arrived that the Muhammadans and the Hill chiefs were approaching and the Guru proceeded further on, leaving Ude Singh behind, evidently to cover his retreat. The Guru next came to a garden near about the village of Chamkaur and when the zamindar of

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 212-214.

In between the two battles of Anandpur the later records mention several other incidents which we have omitted in the narrative given above. It is said that Ajmer Chand of Kahlur was not in the least sincere in his profession of peace and took the earliest opportunity of again attacking the Guru. Two generals named Saiyad Beg and Alif Khan, each in command of five thousand men, were going from Lahore to Delhi and Ajmer Chand is said to have engaged their services against the Guru for one thousand rupees a day. Saiyad Beg, however, withdrew on the eve of the battle as he had, in the meantime, heard favourable reports about the Guru. When the battle between the Guru and Alif Khan rose to its fiercest pitch Saiyad Beg threw in his lot with the Sikhs and after the defeat of Alif Khan "remained with the Guru as a trusty and powerful ally." Next, Ajmer Chand incited some of his brother chieftains into an alliance against the Guru and attacked Anandpur. Being again defeated he appealed to the Emperor and a large army under Saiyad Khan was sent to reduce the Guru to submission. We are told that this Saiyad Khan was at heart an admirer of the Guru and when he came to know that an expedition was being sent against him, he contrived to get its command. During the early stages of the battle that followed Saiyad Beg was killed after having accounted for a Hill chief. Then began a general engagement and soon an unexpected thing occurred. On beholding the Guru from a distance Saiyad Khan was visibly affected and, coming to the Guru, fell down at his feet. But though Saiyad Khan deserted his army the battle continued under Ramzan Khan and the Sikhs found it impossible to withstand the onslaught. Anandpur was captured and the Guru's property plundered by the Muhammadans, who then retired towards Sarhind. The Sikhs pursued them and, defeating them, recovered the booty that they had captured at Anandpur. As Saina Pat definitely refers to a period of peace lasting a little more than two years (*Gur Sobha*, xi, 4) we could not find a place for these incidents, which may well be pious fabrications of a later age. (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 153-155, 162-164).

the place came to know of this he came personally to the Guru and invited him to come inside the village.¹ Thereupon the Guru established himself at Chamkaur and sent messengers in all directions to apprise the Sikhs of this. In the meanwhile the Hill chiefs and the Muhammadans advanced and met Ude Singh on the way. A fierce combat ensued in which Ude Singh and his companions fought with great bravery and skill for about three hours but they were completely overwhelmed by numbers and cut to pieces.² The allied army then came upon Chamkaur and surrounded it on all sides. For sheer valour and endurance the battle that ensued has scarcely any parallel. The *Zafarnama*³ and the later Sikh accounts say that the Guru had only forty companions with him. Saina Pat does not mention any exact number but it is clear that the Guru's army was infinitesimally small in comparison with the huge host that had encompassed it. But still there was no defeatism in the Guru's ranks and batch by batch the Sikhs went forward to certain death and never faltered or hesitated. The persons whom, besides the Guru, Saina Pat individually mentions are the two elder sons of the Guru, Ajit Singh and Zorawar Singh, and a Sikh named Sant

¹ *Gur Sobha*, xii, 7.

Macauliffe says that the Guru first took refuge in a garden and "sent to a Jat agriculturist to ask him for a place of rest. The Jat tried to put him off with excuses, but the Guru placed him under arrest for the moment. He then took the Jat's house, and turned it into a miniature fort where he took shelter with his men." (*op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 186). On the other hand, Sukha Singh says that on reaching Chamkaur the Guru asked the local zamindar to give him a place to stay in. On the zamindar's refusal the Guru forcibly seized his fort and imprisoned him. (*Gur Bilas*, xxi). The account given in the *Suraj Prakas* is again somewhat different. But it is clear that the place where the Guru took his shelter hardly deserves the name of a fort. It was a mud structure where the Guru extemporised a defence as best as he could.

² Bhai Sukha Singh says that on leaving Anandpur the Guru went to Kiritpur, fighting rearguard actions all the way. Then he seems to have come near the Sarsa via Nirmoh and it was near the Sarsa that Ude Singh's battle was fought. It is said that in the confusion that followed the Guru's party was dispersed, his two wives, Mata Sundari and Sahib Kaur, going in one direction and his mother Gujari with her two younger grandsons going in another. (*Gur Bilas*, xxi. See also, Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 180).

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 202.

Singh. All of them fought and died one after another, working havoc in the allied ranks, and lastly, the Guru himself engaged in the combat. But nothing more could be done and the Guru stealthily left the place, throwing dust into the eyes of the allies, who were waiting in eager expectancy of his capture or death.¹

Searched by the Muhammadans on all sides the Guru somehow reached Machiwara,² "a town with a ferry over the Sutlej, twenty-two miles east of Ludhiana." There he took up his residence with two *masands* named Gulaba and Panjaba, who received him kindly and entertained him with goat's meat. But they soon became afraid of the consequences of harbouring a man like the Guru and frankly told him of their apprehensions. Fortunately at this crisis there appeared two men, named Nabi Khan and Gani Khan, who had sold horses to the Guru at Anandpur and were friendly towards him. The Guru asked them to bring blue clothes for him and assumed the garb of a *pir*. He was then borne in a litter by Nabi Khan and Gani Khan and his own attendants and all enquirers were told that he was *Uch Ka Pir*.³ In this manner the spies were deceived and the Guru came to Kanech "in the eastern part of what is now the Ludhiana district." Thence he went to Hetar where Nabi Khan and Gani Khan took their leave. The Guru is said to have given them presents and a certificate, stating the circumstances of their help and recommending them to the consideration of the Sikhs. The Guru then moved on and came to Jatpura, where he learnt of the terrible tragedy that had been enacted at Sarhind.

¹ It is, however, stated in the *Gur Bilas* that Sant Singh, who resembled the Guru in appearance, was dressed in the Guru's clothes and accoutrements and left at Chamkaur when the Guru secretly abandoned that place. Sant Singh and his companions fought on and were killed and the Muhammadans cut the head of Sant Singh, thinking it to be that of the Guru. But the old commanders soon detected the mistake. (*Gur Bilas*, xxi. See also, Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 190).

² From this point till the Guru started for the south from Damdama Saina Pat is unaccountably brief and we have therefore mainly followed the *Gur Bilas* and Macauliffe.

³ "The expression Uch Ka Pir meant either high priest as a general religious title, or priest of Uch, a well-known Muhammadan city in the southern part of the Punjab." (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 192).

It has already been said that in the confusion that followed the battle near the Sarsa the Guru's mother, Gujari, with her two younger grandsons, Jujhar Singh and Fateh Singh, had got separated from the Guru's party and had taken shelter under a Brahman, who was a discharged cook of the Guru and a native of a place called Kheri near Sarhind. With the hope of getting a reward by surrendering the party to the Nawab of Sarhind the Brahman took the *Chaudhri* of Kheri into his confidence and then the two together went to the next highest official, the governor of Murinda. The latter came to the Brahman's house and took the Guru's mother and her two grandsons to Wazir Khan of Sarhind, who ordered them to be confined in a tower. Next day the two boys were brought before Wazir Khan, who asked them to embrace Islam if they wanted to save their lives. The boys gave a reply worthy of their parentage and Wazir Khan ordered them to be put to death. It is said that the Viceroy was incited by one Suchanand Khatri, who had a grudge against the Guru and who now meanly took this opportunity of having his revenge. Thus, though the Nawab of Maler Kotla made an attempt to save the lives of the boys, Wazir Khan stuck to his order and the two boys, aged only 9 and 7, were most mercilessly executed. When the Guru's mother heard of what had happened she fell down senseless and never rose again.¹

The Sikh records state that the Guru received the news with perfect composure and proceeded on his way as if nothing had happened. Continuing his retreat he came to Dina, where he was hospitably received by Shamira and his brothers, grandsons of Jodh Rai, who had rendered assistance to Guru Hargobind on one occasion. It was at Dina that the Guru composed his

¹ Macauliffe writes: "It is a general belief among the Sikhs that the children were bricked into a wall and suffered to die in that position, but the authors of the *Suraj Prakash* and the *Gur Bilas* both state that the children were put to death in the order of their ages by the sword of a Ghilzai executioner." (*op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 198). Saina Pat merely states that Jujhar Singh gave a fitting reply which put the Nawab and his courtiers into extreme uneasiness and that the two boys chose the path of martyrdom for the sake of religion as their grandfather had done. (*Gur Sobha*, xii, 73, 74). See also Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 88.

letter to Aurangzib and sent it to the Emperor through Daya Singh and Dharm Singh. Then the Guru moved further on and reached Kot Kapura where he requested the owner of the local fort to hand it over to him. This being refused and news having arrived that the army of Wazir Khan was approaching, the Guru again retreated and after halting at several places at last reached Khidrana. The Guru's attendants had, in the meanwhile, increased in number and he was not as helpless as he had been since Chamkaur. It was now possible for him to put up some defence but as he found that the tank at Khidrana, which was in the present Ferozepur district of the Punjab, had run dry, he took up his position in a neighbouring forest and awaited the advance of the Muhammadan army. The brunt of the attack fell on those deserters of Anandpur, who, as we have said before, had unexpectedly come to the Guru's assistance. These were all overpowered but Wazir Khan's army could not continue the fight any longer. As in the battle of Lahira in the days of Guru Hargobind, the Muhammadans were soon in great straits for want of water and were compelled to retreat, and the Guru obtained what has since been acclaimed as a great victory for him. Khidrana has since been known as "Muktsar" or the tank of salvation and Sikhs in large numbers visit the place on the 1st of *Magh*, the anniversary of the battle.

After the battle of Khidrana the Guru, for some time, travelled from place to place and came to Talwandi Sabo, in the state of Patiala. It has since been known as Dandama or the breathing place, because here at last the Guru could pass some time in comparative peace. Here resided a great friend of the Guru named Dalla, who firmly stood by him and, in the meantime the Guru's strength also seems to have increased to some extent, as besides his regular followers, he had also taken some Dogars and Bairars into his service. Moreover, as Dalla is said to have pointed out, it was always open to the Guru to retire "into the recesses of the forest, where, even if an army penetrated, it would perish for want of water."¹ At any rate, the Guru was not disturbed for

¹ Macauliffe, *op cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 220, 221.

some time and he utilised the period of respite in laying strong the foundations of Sikhism in the Malwa tract. Many old and hereditary Sikhs were given *pahul* and brought more thoroughly into the Khalsa. One of these was the Guru's friend Dalla but the most notable were the two brothers, Tiloka and Rama, the former the ancestor of the Nabha and the latter of the Patiala house. Besides, new converts were also made in large numbers and Trumpp says that the Guru added about 120,000 disciples. Ever since, Damdama "became the Benares of the Sikhs, and many resort thither, as a residence at Damdama is considered a very meritorious act. A saying of Govind Singh is current among the Sikhs, that whoever would dwell at Damdama, he would become wise, be he ever so great a fool. The study of the Granth is much in vogue there and the Gurumukhi writers of Damdama are considered the best."¹ This literary fame of the place may well have its origin in the fact that the Guru passed some, at least, of his time at Damdama in literary pursuits. A new recension of the *Granth Sahib* was brought out here and there can be no doubt that a part, at least, of the Guru's own works was composed at Damdama. It will thus be seen that, looked at from the constructive point of view, we can credit to the Guru some very solid achievements at Damdama but the Guru left this work and started for the south, leading us to the last and the most controversial aspect of his career.

III. The Guru and the Emperors,

The last two years, approximately, of Guru Gobind Singh's life were spent in a manner so unlike his previous career that the Guru's conduct has seemed almost inexplicable and conflicting views and accounts have necessarily followed. His journey to the south to meet Aurangzib, his participation in the battle of Jajau, where Bahadur Shah vanquished his rival Azam Shah and won the Mughal throne, his going to Delhi and Agra, and lastly, his accompanying Bahadur Shah in his Rajputana campaign and

¹ Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xcii.

thence to the Deccan, have been so difficult to reconcile with the ideals of his life and his transparent character that all sorts of surmises have been resorted to for an explanation of his activities during the period in question. One writer has said that the Guru had become very much depressed and he went to the Deccan for a change of air,¹ while another has gone to the extreme of suggesting that the Guru had lost his reason and was no longer responsible for his actions.² Some, again, say that he went to the Deccan because he had been given a small command by Bahadur Shah and a Muhammadan writer makes the preposterous assertion that the Guru had even agreed to embrace Islam. Most of the sources are either inadequate or untrustworthy and it is not easy to cut a way through.

Now, it has already been stated that from Dina the Guru had sent a letter to Aurangzib through Daya Singh and Dharm Singh and the Sikh chroniclers tell us that this was the well-known *Zafarnama* or the Persian epistle to Aurangzib. We are further told that "Daya Singh and Dharm Singh succeeded in delivering it, and were furnished with a *parwana* of safe conduct for their return journey. The perusal of the *Zafarnama* is said to have softened the Emperor's heart and led him to repent; hence his permission to the Guru's messengers to return to their own country in peace and safety. They, however, received no verbal or written reply to the Guru's letter."³ Nevertheless, the Guru started for the south and, though many of his friends and followers attempted to dissuade him, he did not desist from his purpose.⁴ Two points arise at this stage for consideration. In the first place, were the contents of the *Zafarnama* of such a character as were likely to produce repentance in a man like Aurangzib? Secondly, how was it that without a *parwana* or assurance of any kind the Guru could proceed on his journey without any molestation from the local officers? The first point must ever remain a matter of opinion and it is quite possible

¹ Buti Shah (Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 167, f.n.2.)

² Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 225, 226.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 226. *Gur Bilas*, xxiii.

that on a perusal of the *Zafarnama*¹ somebody might say that it was likely to produce just the opposite effect. The other point is more easily settled and there can be no doubt that without an understanding of some sort the Guru could not have gone on freely with his journey.

On the other hand, as Irvine says, "the Muhammadan authors assert that Guru Govind now sent in petitions to Alamgir, offering to make his submission, coupled with a promise to accept Islam. If this is true, no prospect could be more pleasing to such a bigot as that Emperor: and, as we are told, a confidential messenger, or mace-bearer, was sent to bring the suppliant to the court. The messenger produced Govind Singh, in the first instance, before Munim Khan, then nazim or governor of Lahore, and diwan, or chief revenue officer, to Prince Muazzam (afterwards, as Emperor, known as Bahadur Shah). Govind Singh was forwarded by the governor to the Dakhin. On the way, the party heard of Alamgir's death, which took place at Ahmadnagar, in the Dakhin, on the 28th Zul Qada, 1118 (2nd March 1707); and Govind, believing his star was again in the ascendant, turned his face and hastened back to Hindusthan."² Irvine admits that the story with all these details is not at all credible but, at the same, he says that there may be some foundation for it. We do not know what he actually means but it appears to us that if we take the Sikh and the Muhammadan accounts together three points come out clearly: that the Guru had sent a communication to the Emperor, that some sort of an understanding had been arrived at, and that as a result of that understanding the Guru had started for the south. More than this, the evidence that we have discussed does not entitle us to say.

We would next turn to the *Gur Sobha*, in our opinion the soberest and the most reliable of the chronicles about Guru Gobind Singh. Saina Pat says that very soon after the battle of Khidrana³ the Guru made up his mind that the time had come

¹ An English translation is given in Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 201-206.

² Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 88, 89.

³ No name is mentioned but it is clear that Khidrana is meant. (See *Gur Sobha*, xiii, 9-13).

when the Emperor should be acquainted with the true details of all that had been happening. With that object in view, he sent Daya Singh to Aurangzib and Daya Singh started with the letter secreted in his head beneath his turban. He was particularly warned that the letter was to be given to the hands of Aurangzib himself and, by no means, to anybody else. Daya Singh then started on his way and after some time reached Delhi. He came next to Agra and from there he proceeded to the south through Gwalior, Ujjain and the Malwa country till at last he reached Burhanpur. From there he finally reached Ahmadnagar *via* Aurangabad. Daya Singh naturally went to the *Sangat* at Ahmadnagar and explained to the local Sikhs the object of his mission. He does not seem to have received any sincere assistance from the local Sikhs, some of whom were even openly critical of the Guru's policy and actions. Thus a long time passed and Daya Singh failed to find a way of reaching the letter to Aurangzib. In this predicament Daya Singh sent a messenger to the Guru, apparently asking for further instructions. Curiously enough, no sooner had the messenger started than Daya Singh made the acquaintance of a Sikh who apparently had some influence in high quarters and arranged the delivery of the letter to Aurangzib. In this letter the Guru informs the Emperor that he was sending this Singh of his to him in order to acquaint him with the real story regarding himself, the imperial officers, and the Hill chiefs. He briefly states as to how he had been attacked, without any adequate reason, by a widespread combination of the Hill chiefs and how the local officials had sided with them. The Guru asks the Emperor whether he considered this fair. He further says that a true man of honour always keeps his word even if he loses his life thereby but a treacherous man says one thing and does another and the Emperor's officials acted like the latter and wantonly broke their pledges. The responsibility for this the Emperor was bound to bear and the Guru asks the Emperor, as a religious man, what answer he would give before God. The Guru concludes his letter by saying that he wanted to see the Emperor personally, with a retinue of one thousand horsemen, and requests the

Emperor to issue orders so that no obstacles may be put in his way. We are told that after perusing this letter and hearing what Daya Singh told him the Emperor issued orders to the effect that the Guru must not be molested in any way and that he should be allowed to go wherever he liked.¹

It will be seen that the Guru's complaint, according to Saina Pat, is primarily against the officials, who, he says, wantonly broke their pledges, and he makes the Emperor responsible only in the sense that he must accept responsibility for the actions of his officials. His appeal is to the Emperor's sense of justice and to his religious integrity. It is quite conceivable that in the light of the new knowledge that he now acquired about the late affairs in the Punjab, of which possibly he had been mostly ignorant, he now relented and issued the orders as stated above. The crucial point to remember is that the Guru's complaint is against the officials and not against the Emperor. But the tone and substance of the *Zafarnama* are entirely different. Here the Emperor himself is accused of having broken his oath on the Koran and he is described as a faithless man, a worshipper of wealth and a perjurer. The Emperor is told point-blank that he knew not God and believed not in Muhammad. He might be a great monarch but far from him was religion. The whole document goes on in this strain and it is not difficult to guess whether it was likely to produce indignation or repentance in the Emperor's mind. On the other hand, the assertion of the Muhammadan writers that the Guru had surrendered and that he had promised to accept Islam is simply preposterous and must be summarily rejected. But it is a fact that a few months before the death of Aurangzib the Guru began moving freely about and this, we think, can best be explained on the supposition that something like what Saina Pat relates must have happened in the meanwhile.²

But the question still remains as to why the Guru sought an interview with the Emperor. The later Sikh records, no

¹ *Gur Sobha*, xiii.

² If this is true, the *Zafarnama* must be regarded as a modified and later version of the original letter to Aurangzib.

doubt, speak of frequent appeals to the Emperor on the part of the Hill chiefs and give the impression that the whole campaign against the Guru was being conducted with his full knowledge and approbation. But considering the fact that the Emperor was throughout this period living far away in the south at Ahmadnagar the story of these constant appeals to him on the part of the petty and little known Hill chiefs of the Punjab seems hardly credible. Indeed, it is important to note that Saina Pat mentions an embassy to a Sultan only once and it is doubtful whether even here the Emperor is meant.¹ We may take it therefore that the whole thing was engineered by the local officials, among whom Wazir Khan of Sarhind appears to have taken the most prominent part. Besides a general knowledge, or what the local officials allowed him to know, the Emperor had no inkling into the real state of affairs. That was the reason of Daya Singh's embassy to Ahmadnagar. The Guru's point was that the local officials had unnecessarily and unjustly interfered in the quarrel which the Hill chieftains had forced on him, and having once taken sides they went to extremes which no canon of governmental ethics could justify. The crime of Wazir Khan, particularly, was of such a heinous and brutal character that the Guru would have been false to himself and one of his fundamental ideals if he sat idle and took no steps for the punishment of the wrong-doer. His dissipated resources and his accepted principle of taking to arms only when all other methods had failed led him to resort to diplomacy and it is quite understandable that this was the purpose for which the Guru sought to meet the Emperor. The death of Aurangzib checked him for a while but ostensibly with the same purpose he helped Bahadur Shah at Jajau and kept himself in that Emperor's train till the end of his life. The Sikh records definitely state that this was the object with which he joined Bahadur Shah. That the Guru had joined the Emperor with a definite object in view and

¹ *Gur Sobha*, ix, 10.

Whenever Saina Pat speaks of the Emperors he uses the word *Shah*, and so it seems that by the word "*Sultan*" somebody else, possibly the Emperor's representative at Delhi, is meant.

consultations to that purpose were going on is definitely proved by the Guru's letter to the Sikhs of Dhaul dated about the 15th of October, 1707, wherefrom it appears that "the old negotiations, that had brought him so far, were then in progress and that he soon expected to return to the Punjab."¹ But apparently the matter had not concluded when the Emperor started for Rajputana (12th November, 1707) and the Guru had to accompany the Emperor. The latter, however, avoided him under one pretext or another.² Thus, when he saw that his efforts had failed and that his own end was near, he commissioned Banda to accomplish by force what he had failed to accomplish by an appeal to justice. If this view is accepted all inconsistencies disappear and the Guru's activities during the last two years of his life cease to be the puzzle they have hitherto been.

Be that as it may, we are told that the Guru received the news of Aurangzib's death some time before he reached a place called Baghaur³ in Marwar country. Thereafter the Guru's movements are somewhat obscure and Saina Pat tells us that he went to the place of Kichak and had a fight with the local people.⁴ But he must have retraced his steps and, as Irvine says, "it seems certain that Govind Singh joined Bahadur Shah at some point, when that prince was on his march down country from Lahore to Agra, to contest the throne with his brother, Azam Shah."⁵ Bahadur Shah's friendliness towards the Guru has once been seen before when he went unscathed while the Hill chiefs were severely punished, though his offence was the same, if not greater. The Sikh writers, as we have seen, attributed this to the influence of the Prince's secretary, Nandlal, and we are told that it was this Nandlal who now advised Bahadur Shah to call the Guru to his assistance.⁶ Whatever may be the

¹ Ganda Singh, *Banda Singh Bahadur*, p. 11.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 234, 235.

³ *Gur Sobha*, xiv, 29. *Gur Bilas*, xxiv, 102.

⁴ *Gur Sobha*, xiv.

It is difficult to say who this Kichak was and what place Saina Pat actually means.

⁵ Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 89.

⁶ *Gur Bilas*, xxv. Macauliffe, *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 230.

truth of the matter, it is undeniable that soon after the battle the Guru was with the new Emperor at Agra. The Sikhs say that the Emperor made the Guru some costly presents¹ and this is confirmed by an entry in the *Bahadur-Shah-Nama* of the 2nd of August, 1707, "when a jewelled scarf was presented to Govind Singh."² We are told that while at Agra the Guru resided in a garden about four miles distant from the imperial residence and he came on occasional visits to the Emperor.³ A few months passed in this way till on the 12th of November, 1707, Bahadur Shah started on his Rajputana campaign. There is absolutely no doubt that the Guru also accompanied the Emperor. Saina Pat is clear on this point and Khafi Khan says: "During the days when Bahadur Shah directed his attention towards Haidarabad or when he started towards that place, one of the leaders of that infamous community, Govind by name, came unto the presence of the Emperor, accompanied by two or three hundred *Sowars* carrying spears and some infantry, and proceeded in the company of the Emperor." The Guru's subsequent movements are thus bound up with those of Bahadur Shah and though Saina Pat states that on occasions the Guru left the main army and went some way on his own, he soon rejoined the Emperor's train and the itinerary that he gives agrees, in outline, quite well with what we get from the Mughal records. But during this whole period we find no reference anywhere that the Guru participated in any of the actions in which the Emperor engaged and it seems more probable that he had been travelling as a mere companion than that, as some writers say,⁴ he had been given a command.

It should be noted, however, that the Sikh writers do not say that the Guru had himself participated in the battle of Jajau but that he only sent some men of his own. It was only when the battle was over that the Guru went to Agra *via* Delhi, Mathura and Brindaban. (*Gur Bilas*, xxvi. Macauliffe, *ibid.*, p. 230, 231. *Gur Sobha*, xv). Regarding the first point Saina Pat merely states that Bahadur Shah sent the Guru a letter and the Guru replied assuring him that the throne was his (xv, 7-9).

¹ *Gur Sobha*, xvi, 35. Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 232.

² Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 90.

³ *Gur Sobha*, xvi.

⁴ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 81. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. xciv. Forster, *op. cit.*, pp. 262, 263.

IV. The Guru's death

In the train of Bahadur Shah the Guru, in course of time, arrived at a place called Nander "on the margin of the river Godavari in the present state of Haidarabad and about one hundred and fifty miles north-west of its capital." Here the Guru was assassinated by a Pathan. The circumstances are involved in mystery and we have different versions of what had happened. Bhai Sukha Singh states that one day two Pathan youths came and greeted the Guru. They were asked who they were and where they came from. They replied that they were the sons of Painda Khan¹ and inhabitants of Chhota Mir, a village in the Jalandhar Doab, near the city of Jalandhar. The Guru received them kindly and gave them some money for their expenses. Two or three days later the boys again came and were similarly treated. A sword, which somebody had presented to the Guru and which was lying near by, was given by him to one of the Pathans and the Guru said that a man, who had a sword in his hand and saw the enemy of his father or grandfather before his eyes and yet failed to avenge the wrong, had been born in vain. The young man was puzzled and going home to his mother he asked her what the Guru might have meant. The mother of the Pathan youth told him in reply that what the Guru said was true but yet he must, on no account, fight with him as the Guru was a very powerful man. The Pathan youth again came to the Guru and the latter repeated what he had told him last time. The young man was at last aroused and he struck the Guru, the third blow penetrating into the Guru's intestines. Upon this there was a row and a Sikh came and cut off the Pathan's head. The wound was sewed up and Bahadur Shah gave the Guru to understand that if he so desired he was ready to punish the other culprits but the Guru said that there was no need for that as he had received the wound according to his own desire. The Guru began to progress but he reopened his wound in attempting to draw the strings of a bow and expired soon after.

¹ *Gur Bilas*, xxix.

It will be seen that four points emerge out of the above story: that the Guru was assassinated, that the assassin was a Pathan, that the attack was self-invited, and that the Pathan was a son or grandson of Painsa Khan. A son of Painsa Khan, who had died in 1634, could, by no means, be a young man in 1708, and it may be doubted whether even a grandson could be. Thus in the other variant of the story the name of Painsa Khan is dropped and we are introduced to a Pathan merchant who had sold horses to the Guru at Anandpur. This variant again has variants of its own. The story goes that one day when the Guru was apparently short of funds the Pathan came and asked for payment on account of the horses. The Guru told him to come some other day but the Pathan pressed for immediate payment. "He used an angry gesture, and his mutterings of violence provoked Gobind to strike him dead. The body of the slain Pathan was removed and buried, and his family seemed reconciled to the fate of its head. But his sons nursed their revenge, and awaited an opportunity of fulfilling it. They succeeded in stealing upon the Guru's retirement, and stabbed him mortally when asleep or unguarded."¹ This is what Cunningham writes but others state that taken by repentance the Guru took the deceased Pathan's wife and boy under his protection and brought up the latter as his own son. This boy is said to have been incited, as in the first story, by the Guru himself to strike him and the boy did it with fatal results.² Here again, it will be seen that the common factors are that the Guru had been assassinated, that the assassin was a Pathan and that the attack was self-invited. It is not difficult to guess how the story of the self-invited attack arose. The Sikhs who regarded the Guru as an instrument of God and sometimes, against the express injunctions of the Guru, even as an incarnation,³ could hardly reconcile themselves to the fact that Guru Gobind Singh had fallen a victim to the dagger

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

² Macgregor, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, pp. 99, 100. See also Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

³ This we find even as early as the time of the *Gur Sobha* (v, 46; xiv, 1).

of an assassin and in order to make it somewhat more acceptable the story of the self-invited attack was given currency. In fact, in the other versions which we will now relate this story finds no place.

According to Macauliffe the more probable account of the Guru's death is the one given in one of the recensions of Bahadur Shah's history. We are told: "The Guru was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics, and indeed all varieties of people. One day an Afghan, who frequently attended these meetings, was sitting listening to him, when certain expressions which were disagreeable to the ears of the faithful fell from the Guru's tongue. The Afghan was enraged and, regardless of the Guru's dignity and importance, stabbed him twice or thrice with a poniard."¹ Though, as far as we are aware, there is nothing in the Guru's life and writings to show that he was a sworn enemy of Islam or to support Irvine's assertion that his own precept prohibited all friendship with Muhammadans,² the possibility cannot be ruled out that something might have been said in course of a religious discourse to rouse the ire of a fanatic, for fanatics are fanatics and anything may give them umbrage.

The *Gur Sobha* also says that, while at Nander, the Guru gave religious discourses and many people assembled around him, but Saina Pat's account of what followed is, however, radically different. We are told that one day a Pathan came to the assembly that daily met around the Guru with murderous intentions. He waited there for two or three hours but could do no harm as there were many persons there. He went home and again came after two or three days. He sat continually for three or four hours and then went away. After this he came successively for several days, studying the situation and making up his mind as to what time would be the best for carrying out his nefarious design. He decided that evening time would suit him best. So one evening he again came and the Guru called him

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 241. See also *Tariḳh-i-Bahadur Shahi*, Elliott, Vol. VII, p. 566.

² Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 91.

to his side and gave him *prasad*, which the rascal ate. At that time there were no Sikhs there and the only one attending on the Guru had also gone to sleep. The Guru reclined on his bed for rest and the Pathan, seeing his opportunity, drew out a dagger and struck the Guru in his belly. He repeated the attack for the second time but then his fate was sealed. The Guru drew out his own sword and killed the Pathan. The Guru then called out his Sikhs and they hurried to him from all sides. Two confederates of the Pathan had been waiting outside and these now tried to escape but they were captured by the Sikhs and killed at once. When the Sikhs saw the body of the Pathan they thought that here was another of the confederates and were about to strike it when the Guru stopped them by saying that the rascal had already been accounted for. As yet no one knew that the Guru had been wounded but when he got up and staggered they came to detect the sorrowful fact. The Sikhs were struck with grief and anxiety but the Guru consoled them and said that the Immortal God had saved him and that they need not have any fears. The wound was then washed and sewn but when the Guru tried to raise himself the thread broke. The wound was sewn again and in the morning treated with ointments. Three or four days passed in this way, many Sikhs came to have the Guru's *darshan* and at their request the Guru again appeared in his *darbar*. Again a few days passed and great was the rejoicing of the Sikhs. But the Guru knew that his end was coming and one night he retired to bed after taking a little food. About an hour and a half after midnight the Guru got up and began to recite the Word. He then called aloud to his Sikhs and bade them the last farewell.

Here at last we have an account which is free from all ambiguities and is perfectly sober and rational. Moreover, it is the account of a contemporary, and an associate, who must have been in the know of things and we can think of no reason why it should not be accepted. Saina Pat, however, does not say anything with regard to the identity of the Pathan and the motive behind his murderous attack. It has been suggested, however, that the man was a hireling of Wazir Khan of Sarhind, who was

the real instigator of the crime.¹ The increasing friendliness of the Emperor towards the Guru must have unnerved him because it was not difficult for him to guess the object that the Guru had in view in thus closely associating with the Emperor and even accompanying him to Rajputana and the Deccan. He was the greatest living enemy of the Guru and he must have felt and felt strongly that he was not safe so long as the Guru was alive. His execution of the two younger sons of the Guru was an unforgettable and unforgiveable crime and he must have realised this in his heart of hearts. We think, therefore, that there is nothing unbelievable in the story that Wazir Khan was the real instigator of the murderous attack that led to the Guru's death.

The death of Guru Gobind Singh occurred on *Katik sudi panchami, Samvat 1765*, which is equivalent to Thursday, the 18th of October, 1708.² All authorities are agreed that the Guru came to Nander in the train of the Emperor's army and it appears from Irvine's account that Bahadur Shah's army crossed a river, which must have been the Godavari, at Nander, on the 7th of October. "As he was hurriedly pushing on towards Hyderabad on a military expedition against his rebellious brother, Kam Baksh, he could not have arrived here many days earlier. It may therefore be safely presumed that Guru Govind Singh, who, according to Sikh and other accounts, accompanied the royal camp as far as Nander, must have arrived here during the last week of September, 1708."³ The Guru's stay at Nander thus amounted to about three weeks and Saina Pat gives us a fair idea as to how the days were passed by the Guru. But it appears to us very significant that he does not say anything about Banda or his conversion to Sikhism. According to Sikh tradition the Guru reclaimed Banda and brought him within the fold of the Khalsa on the very first day of his arrival at Nander and this

¹ This view is supported by the *Chatur Jugi*, an old manuscript written by Bhagwan Singh and discovered by Bhai Vir Singh of Amritsar. (Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 255. Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 22).

² For the rendering of the date I am indebted to Mr. P. C. Sen Gupta, a well-known writer on Hindu Mathematics.

³ Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 12, f.n. 9.

was virtually the only important act that he did there. It seems curious that Saina Pat should be totally silent about this vital matter, particularly, as he must have seen with his own eyes some at least of the terrible consequences that followed. We would therefore leave it to the reader to judge as to whether there may not be something after all in Rose's assertion that "there seems some reason to believe that he (Banda) had been active before the death of Gobind Singh and possibly it was that Guru's death which caused the leaderless Sikhs to flock to his standard."¹

V. Epilogue

We had started with the suggestion that the correspondence between some of the preponderant traits in the Jat character and certain developments associated with the Khalsa appears to be remarkably close and that the transformation of Sikhism thus affords a rather striking example of the assimilation of the form of the religious system to the innate tendencies of the people.² As we have seen, the reactions first began to appear during the days of Guru Hargobind, leading to some concessions on the one hand and a good deal of misunderstanding on the other. Juxtaposed in this manner the two tendencies could not continue long in working order and we pass through an uncertain phase in the history of Sikhism. The greatest testimony to the constructive genius of Guru Gobind Singh is the outstanding fact that he could seize what was vital in the situation and, as Cunningham says, relume it with Promethean fire.³ All that constituted the glory of Sikhism, the worship of the One True

¹ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 698, f. n. 5:

We are aware that negative evidence can hardly be regarded as decisive and we must not be understood to mean that Banda had no connection with Guru Gobind Singh because that would militate against a previous statement of ours that (*Supra*, p. 145) the Guru had commissioned Banda to accomplish by force what he had himself failed to accomplish by diplomacy. All that we mean is that there should be a more sifting enquiry into the matter.

² Vol. I of this work, p. 21.

³ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Lord, the Word and the Name, the spirit of brotherhood and of self-sacrifice found their proper place in the new dispensation, wherein again, the Jat love of freedom and their martial spirit received the fullest recognition. And though it would be too much to expect that the marauding instinct inherent in the Jat could be reconciled with the ethics of a religious system, this too, was canalised to an appreciable extent. The Sikh gave him the ideal, the Jat the material, and combining the two the Guru forged a dynamic force, which none could henceforward ignore. Speaking dialectically, we may say that the Sikh was the thesis, the Jat the antithesis, and the synthesis came in the Khalsa.

Trumpp says: "A body containing such elements could not remain quiet; their course was prescribed to them, and they had indeed no other choice but to conquer or to be conquered."¹ The history of the Sikh struggle for independence in the eighteenth century fully bears out the truth of the above statement. Repeatedly repulsed and dispersed, prices laid upon their heads, their holy places desecrated and their temples destroyed, massacred in thousands and driven to the desert wilds, wantonly persecuted by the Mughals on the one hand, and pillaged by the Durrani on the other, the Sikhs yet succeeded in erecting a sovereignty of their own, which, as Narang says, "gave a magnificent sunset to the stormy day of Hindu glory."

But attempts have been made to belittle the achievements of the Sikhs and ingeniously deny them their proper place in history. For instance, Sarkar writes: "The Mughal Government under Aurangzib did succeed in breaking up the Guru's power. It robbed the Sikhs of a common leader and a rallying centre. Thereafter the Sikhs continued to disturb public peace, but only in isolated bands. They were no longer an army fighting under one chief, with a definite political aim, but merely moving bodies of brigands,—extremely brave, enthusiastic, and hardy, but essentially plunderers uninspired by any ambition to build up an organised Government in the land. If Aurangzib had been followed by worthy successors, these Sikh bands would have

¹ Trumpp. *op. cit.*, p. xcvi.

been hunted down as surely as the Mirzas and Champat Rai Bundela had been in the past, and Dhundhia Waug and Tantia Topi were to be under British rule.”¹ These statements betray such a complete misconception of Guru Gobind Singh’s life-work and the ideology that he had created that one need hardly take them seriously. The Mughals had not robbed the Sikhs of a common leader but this was done by the Guru himself when he had left the leadership to the collective wisdom of the community, knowing fully well that as need arose it would throw up its own leaders, and that the Guru’s hopes were not belied is shown by the part that even such obscure men as Kapur Singh and Jassa Singh Kalal played in the Sikh war of independence. “The roving bands of plunderers” blunted the edge of the Abdali’s aggressive power, which even the Marathas had failed to resist, and turned the great triumph of Panipat into a barren victory. That Mughal rehabilitation in the eighteenth century required only a few worthy successors to Aurangzib is a proposition which would be accepted by none who is even moderately acquainted with the facts of the case and no worthy successor could possibly have done more to root the Sikhs out, than was done by some, at least, of the Lahore Viceroys. Finally, to compare the Sikhs with the Mirzas or with Champat Rai Bundela is to misconceive the entire issue of the Sikh war of independence and to ignore completely the ideological factors.² It must not be forgotten that in the latter instance “a nation was up in arms against its enemies and it is the collective efforts of the masses rather than individual achievements that ultimately made the revolution a success.”³

Sarkar further says: “If Ranjit Singh had not arisen, there would have been no large and united state under Sikh dominion, but a number of petty principalities in the Punjab with a ruling

¹ Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 320, 321.

² This seems to have been realised by Ahmad Shah Abdali because he knew where the shoe pinched. He “is said to have remarked that it would be necessary for the complete reduction of Sikh power to wait until their religious fervour had evaporated.” N. K. Sinha, *Rise of the Sikh Power* (Second edition), p. 67.

³ N. K. Sinha, *ibid.*, p. 2.

aristocracy of Sikh soldiers, sending their organised marauders every year to raid and lay waste the country up to Delhi, Saharanpur and even Hardwar, or engage in their selfish internecine wars between clan and clan. These would have been silently absorbed in the expanding British empire. The Persian and not the Sikh gave the deathblow to the Mughal empire, and it was not from the heirs of Aurangzib but from the Afghan inheritors of Nadir Shah that the Sikhs conquered the Panjab."¹ This again is a piece of logic into which, we confess, we are unable to enter. We are at a loss to understand what offence the poor Sikhs committed in conquering the Punjab from the Afghans and not from the Mughals. People would rather say that their performance was far the more creditable inasmuch as the Afghans were foreigners, whereas the Mughals had become Indians and their government was a native government after all. And it is important to remember that the British conquered the Punjab not from the Afghans but from the Sikhs and, when they took over, they found the frontier intact, with every inch of Indian soil inside it. Moreover, Ranjit Singh was in reality an aberration because a military monarchy was far off from anything that the Guru had contemplated. If, after the final expulsion of the Afghans, the Sikhs could have had some little more time to settle down and the Guru's ideals a larger chance to fructify themselves, we might have seen the unique and unprecedented spectacle of something like a federated republic in place of the warring clans, sending out their annual marauding expeditions, but the circumstances were wholly unsuitable for such a consummation and Ranjit Singh arose instead.

Be that as it may, it is undeniable that Guru Gobind Singh must be counted among the greatest of Indians of all ages. "The object he attempted was great and laudable. It was the emancipation of his tribe from oppression and persecution; and the means which he adopted, were such as a comprehensive mind could alone have suggested." To an atmosphere of gloom and utter degradation he brought a message of hope and deliverance,

¹ Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 321.

and a will to do or to die. He not only brought into being a moral force of an intensely dynamic character but was careful to harness to it as much of material assistance as he possibly could. He was a saint as well as a soldier and his ideal was a brotherhood of soldier-saints. As he himself said, he bore no enmity to any one but he was the eternal enemy of tyranny and oppression, whatever might be their brand or form. He had declared on them a never-ending war and created the Khalsa to carry it on.

His political principles followed from this fundamental ideal. He had no quarrel with the Mughal Government as such and we have seen that in the *Bachitra Natak* he even recognises the temporal sovereignty of the successors of Babar.¹ But there are certain limits which a Government worth its name must not transgress; it must be just, it must be impartial and it must, in no way, oppress its subjects. Such transgressions the Guru was not prepared to tolerate and his quarrel with them was permanent. If this is understood aright and it is remembered that the Guru's principle was to take arms only in the last resort, his relations with the Emperor during the last two years of his life will cease to puzzle us and the career of Banda will reveal itself in its true perspective. We think further that the staunch loyalty that the Sikhs exhibited towards the British during the crisis of the Mutiny, so soon after their own subjugation, will also be viewed in a newer light. Whatever that might be, in the circumstances of the eighteenth century this fine distinction was difficult to maintain and it ceased to be valid for all practical purposes. The Mughal Government had become rotten to the core and it was becoming futile any longer to expect any justice from its officials. One trouble led to another and the Sikhs soon found themselves in the midst of a never-ending quarrel with the Muhammadans. This struggle inevitably coloured the views of later writers and principles and policies were attributed to the Guru, which find no support in his life and writings. It has been said that he was a sworn enemy of the Muhammadans and that his object was "to bestow empire on the Khalsa." The

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 305.

result has been that even a writer like Irvine has been led to make the astounding statement that the Guru's precepts prohibited all friendship with Muhammadans.¹

It will not do for us to forget that, whatever else he might have been, Guru Gobind Singh was first and foremost a great religious leader. None but a person of a saintly disposition, highly spiritual and with a complete resignation to the will of God, could have behaved as he did during the most acute crisis of his life. Leaving his home and everything in the hands of the enemy he bids farewell to Anandpur, and with his ranks depleted and his family dispersed, his wives going in one direction and his mother with his two younger sons he knew not where, he arrives at Chamkaur and is at once surrounded by the Mughals and the Hill chiefs. After a superhuman fight against the heaviest of odds, in which he sees his two dearest sons and his chosen companions fall one after another before his very eyes, he stealthily leaves the place and for some time is hunted like a wild animal, now escaping in one disguise and now in another, when news arrives of the barbarous and brutal murder of his two younger sons and the no less tragic death of his mother. He faces all this with the most supreme composure and serenely goes on with his work as if nothing has happened. He compiles a new recension of the *Granth Sahib*, adds to his own compositions, and busies himself in laying strong the foundations of Sikhism in the Malwa tract. Certainly, no mere politician or soldier could have done it. It is significant that after a very close contact with the Guru for more than a year Bahadur Shah treated him as a *darvesh* and ordered the considerable movable property left by him to be relinquished to the heirs, though according to rule, it ought to have been confiscated.² It is thus clear that the predominant trait in the Guru's character was that he was a man of God and it is unthinkable that such a man, a man who had preached that

"The temple and the mosque are the same ; the Hindu worship and the Musalman prayer are the same ; all men are the same ; it is

¹ Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 91.

² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

through error they appear different.... .Musalmans and Hindus adopt the customary dress of their different countries.

All men have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same build, a compound of earth, air, fire and water.

Allah and Abhekh are the same ; the Purans and the Quran are the same ; they are all alike ; it is the one God who created all.”¹

could have been the sworn enemy of a community or a class. We would repeat again that there is nothing in the Guru's life and writings to support any such conclusion. The only thing that may be mentioned is the vendetta that he pursued against Wazir Khan of Sarhind but that was a different matter altogether, for to let Wazir Khan go unpunished would have been to deny the very basis of his creed.

The Guru was thus, first and foremost, a man of religion but he was also a man of many-sided attainments of which it is difficult to find a parallel. He was a poet of no mean order, and though tradition affirms that a substantial portion of his works was lost in the Sarsa at the time of his retreat from Anandpur to Chamkaur,² what survived is enough to establish his claims as a litterateur. It has been said that some of his works “deserve the very highest place in the ranks of Hindi poetry of the narrative and epic kind”³ but more striking is the fact how thoroughly the Guru had realised what a vital part literature could be made to play in rousing the dormant energies of a vanquished and a degraded people. The stories from the old Sanskrit literature that he popularised in Hindi served as an effective handmaid to his constructive work and, at the same time, created a demand for literacy and education among his followers.

That Guru Gobind Singh was a great soldier and a great general would perhaps be denied by none who is even cursorily acquainted with the story of his military adventures. In the *Bachitra Natak* the Guru is rather modest with regard to his own performances and, as is to be expected, attributes his successes to the will of the Almighty, but from what little he

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 275, 276.

² Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

³ Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

says, it is not difficult to see what an accomplished archer he was and how unperturbed and dauntless he could be even in the midst of raining death. In forming an estimate of the military abilities of Guru Gobind Singh it must not be forgotten for a moment that there was a tremendous disparity in numbers and resources between himself and his enemies and the amazing thing is not that he lost but that he could fight so long. The defence that he extemporised at Chamkaur, where, as tradition affirms, the Guru, with only forty chosen companions, kept at bay for several hours a whole host of the opposing troops has hardly a parallel, and the keen and discerning eye with which he chose the spot where the battle of Khidrana was fought and the army of Wazir Khan was compelled to retire, leaves us in no doubt as to his tactical genius. As Cunningham says, "success is not always the measure of greatness" and this dictum should be kept in view in judging of the achievements of Guru Gobind Singh.

And enough, we think, has been said to establish fully the Guru's claim to be regarded as a builder *par excellence*. He brought a new people into being and released a new dynamic force into the arena of Indian history. What that force accomplished is a matter of history but what is not so well-known are the diverse ways in which it sought to uplift the depressed and the down-trodden. Macauliffe says: "The Guru's teaching had the magical effect of changing a pariah or outcast through an interminable line of heredity into a brave and staunch soldier, as the history of the Sikh Mazhabi regiments conclusively proves. This metamorphosis has been accomplished in defiance of the hide-bound prejudices and conservatism of the old Hindu religious systems. Prior to the time of the Sikh Gurus no general ever conceived the idea of raising an army from men who were believed to be unclean and polluted from their birth; but the watchword and war-cry of the Sikhs 'Wahguru ji ka Khalsa, Wahguru ji ka fatah', and the stimulating precepts of the tenth Guru, altered what had hitherto been deemed the dregs of humanity into warriors whose prowess and loyalty never failed their leaders."¹ Nothing further is required to prove the

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 99, 100.

tremendous driving power of the moral force that the Guru had created. Cunningham writes: "A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing, than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look, which marks the fervour of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity." Here again we have the testimony of a writer, who knew the Sikhs intimately, as to the many-sided transformation that the Guru's ideals had wrought in his followers. The strength of these ideals was sorely tested, as few ideals have ever been, in the terrible ordeal of the Sikh war of independence and it is a matter of history that they carried the Sikhs through.

But, as we have said before, there was one particular trait in the heritage of his followers which even the Guru could not completely eradicate. It is difficult to say how far the outrages on the subjects of the Hill chiefs and the plundering of their effects were dictated by the necessities of the situation or were resorted to as reprisals but there are indications, here and there, that these did not always meet with the Guru's approval. It further appears that even when the Guru was proceeding in Bahadur Shah's train through Rajputana and the Deccan, incidents sometimes happened in which the Guru's followers took supplies from villagers by force.¹ As we have pointed out before, this predatory trait could hardly be reconciled with a religious system and it seems to us that it ever remained a discordant factor in the synthesis that the Guru had carried out. The new ideology, no doubt, kept it in check and sometimes gave it a wider purpose and direction, as is amply illustrated in the Sikh war of independence, but when the purpose was served and the end attained, it showed itself in the internecine quarrels that marked the period of the Sikh *misl*s. Ranjit Singh kept it

¹ *Gur Sobha*, xiv, 19; xviii, 21.

occupied in a systematic plan of expansion and conquest but, after his death, it soon reappeared in the lawlessness and rapacity of the Khalsa soldiery and in the more subtle ambition of some of the leaders, and became one of the main causes of the political debacle of the Sikhs in the middle of the nineteenth century.

But when all has been said, the fact remains that Guru Gobind Singh's handiwork, *viz.*, the Khalsa, carved its way to renown and glory and played a noble part in the arena of Indian history. To our mind the Khalsa's greatest contribution to the cause of India was the wresting of the Punjab and the adjoining lands up to the frontier from the clutches of the Afghans. It is not improbable that if they had not done so, some of these tracts might have been lost, even geographically, to India, as some other tracts had been in the past. The Guru's followers kept the frontier intact and no service could have been greater. Their political creations have long gone the way of things human and they have passed through many ebbs and tides, but even now, when they constitute roughly only one per cent. of the people of India, they hold a position and they wield an influence entirely out of proportion to their numbers. All this they primarily owe to the spirit of rectitude and self-sacrifice, of discipline and God-mindedness, that their Guru had instilled into them and their salvation in the future lies, as it lay in the past, in an unfailing adherence to the ideals of their founder.

APPENDIX A

The Chronology of Guru Hargobind

The difficulties about Guru Hargobind's chronology arises mainly out of two reasons; in the first place, the period of twelve years for which, according to Mohsin Fani, the Guru had been kept in prison, is difficult to fit in, and secondly, it is often impossible to reconcile the Sikh accounts with contemporary Muhammadan history. The broad outline is clear enough and can easily be accepted. Guru Hargobind succeeded his father in June 1606, at the age of eleven, the Guru having been born in 1595, and his subsequent career, we think, may conveniently be divided into three distinct periods. The first period is practically synchronous with the reign of Jahangir and ends with that Emperor's death in October 1627. The second period witnesses the Guru's quarrels with the Mughal authorities and embraces, perhaps, the first six or seven years of the reign of Shah Jahan. The last is the period of Hargobind's retirement in the hills, which ended in 1645 when he died. There is not much difficulty so far, but as soon as we enter into details the position becomes radically different.

Now, the most important thing that happened during the first period of Guru Hargobind's career was his imprisonment by the order of Jahangir. All the records, Sikh and non-Sikh, are unanimous that both the imprisonment and release took place during the reign of Jahangir, the main difference being only with regard to the period of imprisonment. The Sikh accounts are, more or less, vague on the point; some hint that it lasted for forty days, while others say that the period of imprisonment covered a little over two months.¹ On the contrary, Mohsin Fani explicitly states that the Guru was kept in prison for twelve years. The Sikh records are all much later, whereas Mohsin Fani was a contemporary and a friend of Guru Hargobind, and we would therefore start with the assumption that his statement is correct and see where it leads us.

¹ *Panth Prakas*, p. 103. *Itihas Guru Khalsa*, p. 125.

It is clear that these twelve years must be fitted in somewhere between 1606 and 1627, the year of Jahangir's death, because both imprisonment and release had taken place during his reign. Now, according to Mohsin Fani, the Guru had been in the employ of Jahangir and on the latter's death automatically entered into the service of his son and successor, Shah Jahan. Hargobind necessarily was not a prisoner in 1627 and he could not have been imprisoned later than 1614, the period of his imprisonment being twelve years. But this lower limit goes down lower and lower when other facts are brought under consideration. It has already been stated that Kaulan, the daughter of the Kazi of Lahore, had taken asylum under the Guru. Some time after her arrival in Amritsar Guru Hargobind excavated the famous tank, Kaulasar, in her memory and we are told that this was done in 1621.¹ As Macauliffe points out, Kaulan was present in Amritsar even in 1620 when Baba Atal Rai, the Guru's second son by Nanaki, was born.² Before this the Guru had passed some time in association with Yar Khan, the Faujdar, and in certain other ways which, as we have seen, is difficult to specify. The Guru's third son, Ani Rai, was born in 1618, his second son Suraj Mal in 1617, and his eldest son, Baba Gurditta, towards the close of 1613. Thus it is clear that it is impossible to find a gap where those twelve years could be put in.

On the other hand, what the Sikh chroniclers say seems equally untenable. According to Macauliffe, the Guru was summoned to Delhi in 1612 and when his mother saw that he did not return in time, she became very anxious and sent Bhai Jetha to Delhi. "He succeeded in soothing the emperor, who had been troubled with fearful visions", and as a reward, Jahangir, who had already been favourably inclined towards the Guru through the pleadings of Wazir Khan, ordered Hargobind's release. The period of confinement is not clearly mentioned, though, as we have said, it is hinted that it lasted only 40 days. But there can be little doubt that the Guru had to remain at Gwalior for a much more protracted period and strenuous efforts

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 48.

² *Ibid.*, p. 49, f.n. I.

were needed to soften the Emperor. We have already referred to Mohsin Fani's statement that during the period of the Guru's confinement the deputies and other Sikhs used to come and bow before the walls of the fort. When this had continued for some time the Emperor was moved by pity and set the Guru at liberty. And it is also quite probable that the intercession of the saint Mian Mir had to be requisitioned for the purpose. The matter, therefore, was certainly not as easy as the Sikh chroniclers would have us believe. Some of the Sikh records, on the other hand, state that the Guru was summoned to Delhi in 1616. But, as we have already said, it is impossible to reconcile these accounts with contemporary Muhammadan history. Jahangir left Agra in the autumn of 1613 and established his court and camp at Ajmer, in order to be in closer touch with the military operations that were then going on against Mewar. He left Ajmer on the 10th of November, 1616, and entered Mandu on March 6th, 1617. Then Jahangir started on a tour in Gujarat and returned to Agra in the middle of April, 1619, after an absence of five years and a half.¹ Thus the Sikh accounts also are wholly unacceptable and we have to seek a fresh date for the imprisonment of Guru Hargobind.

We have already given some of the reasons as to why we consider 1607 or thereabouts,² as a more probable time for the Guru's imprisonment. We think further that the postponement of the Guru's marriage with Nanaki lends added support to this view. This Nanaki had been betrothed to Hargobind when his father Guru Arjan was still living,³ and the reasons given for the postponement of the marriage are the extreme youth of Nanaki and the Guru's absence in Delhi, Agra and other places.⁴ But if Hargobind had been summoned to Delhi in 1612, he had clear six years during which he might have celebrated his marriage with Nanaki. The question of extreme youth may safely be disregarded as the Sikh records abound in instances of

¹ Beni Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp. 237, 277, 300.

² *Supra*, p. 10.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 77.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 50.

very early girl marriages. The most plausible explanation would be that after his accession the Guru had very little time to think of his marriage. He was very soon sent to Gwalior and the marriage therefore could not be celebrated till after his release. It appears from the Sikh records that the marriage with Nanaki took place some time before the birth of Baba Gurditta¹ and it thus seems probable that the Guru's imprisonment lasted roughly from 1607 to 1612 or for about five years.

The causes of Guru Hargobind's imprisonment, as given by Mohsin Fani, have already been discussed and it is now necessary to consider whether the circumstances alluded to in the *Dabistan* existed near about 1607, for otherwise we shall have to find a different date. A little discussion will, however, show that the causes that Mohsin Fani puts forward were existent from the very beginning of Guru Hargobind's pontificate. We have already seen that immediately after his accession Hargobind adopted the style of a soldier and systematically turned his attention to the chase. He soon collected an army around himself, and his proclamation to the *masands* seems to have solved the difficulty about procuring ammunitions and horses. We know that the fine imposed on Guru Arjan had not been paid and thus all the reasons given by Mohsin Fani for the Guru's incarceration were there in 1607. The fact that the fine imposed upon Guru Arjan was made the main pretext for sending his son to Gwalior also points to an early date as it is unlikely that the demand would be suddenly revived after it had once been allowed to lapse. We are thus led to reject the evidence of a friend and a contemporary in a matter so vital that it is unthinkable that he should have erred. But it has been shown conclusively that a period of twelve years can, in no way, be accommodated and it may not be improbable that later copyists introduced some mistake into the text of the *Dabistan*. At the same time, we think that it should be clearly stated here that there is no direct evidence for the conclusion that we have suggested. though it appears to us the most plausible when all the

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 50.

relevant facts are dispassionately reviewed. It may, however, be urged against this view that in 1607 the Guru was too young to be taken seriously but the personal issue was unimportant. The purpose of the Emperor seems to have been to keep the young Guru as a hostage to ensure the orderliness of his followers and to put pressure on them for the realisation of the fine imposed on his father.

This brings us to the second period of Guru Hargobind's career. A study of the Sikh records makes it clear that hostilities with the Muhammadan Government commenced soon after the accession of Shah Jahan. It is apparent that, slender as his resources were, the Guru's struggles with the Government of the great Shah Jahan could not last long and, as we have seen, he was driven from post to pillar, till at last he found safety in the hills. Of the three more important battles of the Guru the first, that of Amritsar, was fought, according to Sikh chroniclers, in 1628; the second, that of Lahira, in 1631; and the last, that of Kartarpur, in 1634. The relevant facts have already been discussed and we do not think that there need be any difficulty in accepting these dates as correct. After the battle of Kartarpur the Guru, as we have seen, retired to the hills and lived in his retreat at Kiratpur, more or less, in peace till his death, which, as we have seen, occurred in 1645.¹

¹ *Supra*, pp. 30-31, f.n.

APPENDIX B

The Chronology of Guru Gobind Singh

The confusion about the chronology of Guru Gobind Singh arises primarily because of two reasons; first, the defective nature of the Sikh records and their silence with regard to vital points of chronological interest, and, secondly, the assumption that the Guru passed the first twenty years of his pontificate in utter seclusion in the hills. The first will be unfolded as we proceed but it may be stated at once that the second has directly led to the dating, by the more important of the modern writers, of the public career of Guru Gobind Singh from 1695, he having succeeded to the Guruship in 1675 on the death of his father. Cunningham, Narang and Irvine, all proceed on this basis, though Cunningham adds: "The period is nowhere definitely given by English or Indian writers; but from a comparison of dates and circumstances, it seems probable that Gobind did not take upon himself a new and special character as a teacher of men until about the thirty-fifth year or until the year 1695 of Christ."¹ These writers not only say that the Guru's public career practically commenced near about 1695 but they also assert that the first important public act of the Guru was the making of the Khalsa and all his adventures were subsequent to that event.

But perhaps with the single exception of the authority quoted by Malcolm,² the Sikh records are unanimous in placing the introduction of Guru Gobind Singh's reforms in 1699 and they are corroborated by the news-writer, already referred to. All these Sikh records also definitely say that the incidents narrated in the *Bachitra Natak* took place during the pre-Khalsa period.³ But apart from the unanimous testimony of these

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 67, f.n. 2.

² Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 186, f.n.

³ Excepting the *Gur Bilas*, which places the last incident, *viz.*, the coming of the Prince, Mirza Beg and his four successors, in 1701.

records there are several other facts which leave us in no doubt as to the truth of the matter. Indeed, there is one piece of negative evidence in the *Bachitra Natak* itself which appears to us as, more or less, conclusive. In his description of the battles the Guru gives his followers their full quota of praise and many of them are individually mentioned. We are informed of the feats accomplished by Sri Shah, Nand Chand, Kripal, Dayaram, Maheri Chand, Sangatia and others but nowhere does the common cognomen of "Singh" appear. This fact makes it practically certain that all these battles took place before the Khalsa came into existence. Equally decisive is the evidence of the Bilaspur *Banswara* which states that Raja Bhim Chand passed the closing years of his life as a *Fakir* after abdicating in favour of his son, Ajmer Chand, who became the 35th Raja in 1692 A.D.¹ Now, Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur (Kahlur) figures most prominently in the Guru's account. The battle of Nadaun, the negotiations with Hussain Khan and the fight against Raja Gopal of Guler, in all these Bhim Chand plays a very important part, and if he had abdicated in 1692, it follows that all these events happened prior to that year.²

Rose, who has been the first to give a close attention to this question, is of opinion that the incidents narrated in the *Bachitra Natak* must have taken place between the years 1691 and 1698.³ He arrives at this conclusion mainly on two different grounds. He places the composition of the *Bachitra Natak* in *Samvat* 1755 (1698 A.D.) and secondly, he accepts Gurbux Singh's statement that the first of Guru Gobind Singh's letters discovered by him at Dacca was written at a time "when peace

¹ *Simla Hill States Gazetteer*, Bilaspore, p. 6.

² The *Gur Bilas*, however, states that Bhim Chand participated even in the great siege of Anandpur that took place near about 1702 but the *Banswara* is corroborated by some of the other Sikh records. In connection with the opposition to the Guru's reforms Ajmer Chand is given as the name of the Kahlur Raja by Macauliffe (*op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 99) and *Panth Prakas* (p. 204). This corroboration, however, is, more or less, redundant because the evidence of the *Banswara*, which has been based on the State Archives, must be regarded as final.

³ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 690, f.n. 2.

still prevailed though munitions were being collected." But as Rose also accepts the statement of the *Banswara* that Raja Bhim Chand had abdicated in 1692,¹ it is difficult to see how his views can be maintained. He says that hostilities probably commenced in 1692, the very year which witnessed the end of Bhim Chand's public career, but in that case the battle of Bhangani, the battle of Nadaun, the expedition of the *Khanzada* and the adventures of Hussain Khan will have to be compressed within a single year, which is manifestly impossible. From the Guru's own account it appears that at least the first and second of these engagements took place after an appreciable interval and one single year would be clearly insufficient. Moreover, the reasons that Gurbux Singh advances for his supposition that even in 1691 hostilities had not commenced, do not seem to be convincing. The letter in question "acknowledges the receipt of swords, cloths and money through some delegates sent by the Sangat and asks for more cloths, shields and war munitions."² So there is nothing in the letter itself which suggests that it was written at a time when peace still prevailed. Munitions would certainly be collected in anticipation of war but they would equally be collected when war was going on, or, in some cases, even when war had ended. But Gurbux Singh really bases his argument on the second and the third letters. These letters are not dated but Gurbux Singh states that they were evidently written at intervals of a few months after the first letter of 1691. In the second letter the Guru asks for a first class war elephant and that an elephant was actually sent is clear from the postscript on the letter that followed.³ Gurbux Singh goes on to say that "an elephant was also the primary cause of the commencement of hostilities against him by the Hill Raja of Bilaspore, who subsequently called in the Mughals to his help. The Sikh books relate that this was a Meghna elephant, a present from Raja Ratan Rai of Assam. As contemporary history does not support the Sikh tradition, the elephant in question might

¹ Rose, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 690, f.n. 4.

² *Dacca Review*, 1915, p. 231.

³ *Ibid.*, 1916, p. 316.

have been the one sent from Dacca and possibly a present from Raja Manik Rai of Chittagong through the Dacca Sangat.”¹ It is on the basis of this supposition that the elephant, which is alleged to be the immediate cause of the quarrel between the Guru and Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspore, had been sent by the Dacca Sangat after 1691 that we are asked to accept the statement that hostilities had not yet commenced in that year. The first part of Gurbux Singh’s argument seems plausible and the point has already been discussed. But it has also been seen that it is extremely doubtful whether Raja Bhim Chand had anything to do with the battle of Bhangani, which marked the commencement of hostilities, and we find it difficult to accept the statement of Gurbux Singh in the face of the unanimous Sikh tradition that hostilities had commenced earlier.

Most of the Sikh records are agreed that the battle of Bhangani, where the Guru received his baptism of fire, took place in 1687 A.D. Besides, there is a very interesting piece of evidence which we would mention here for what it is worth. We are told that after the battle was over Guru Gobind Singh rewarded those of his followers who had distinguished themselves in the fray. One of these fortunate few was a friend of the Guru’s youth, the Brahman Dayaram, whom the Guru credits with “having fought bravely like Drona of old.” He was given a shield made of rhinoceros-skin and it is still preserved in the residence of his descendants at Anandpur. It is about 2 ft. 3 ins. in breadth and to it is attached a weapon resembling the triangular head of a spear. On the latter there is an inscription describing the circumstances of the grant, which is dated *Samvat* 1744 (1687 A.D.).² As we are not in possession of the opinion of any expert with regard to this inscription we need not place too much reliance upon it but it cannot be denied that it definitely proves the existence of a strong Sikh tradition that the battle of Bhangani was fought in 1687.³ The failure of the son of Dilawar Khan and the expedition of Hussain Khan

¹ *Dacca Review*, 1916, p. 316.

² T. Banerjee, *Life of Guru Gobind Singh* (in Bengali), pp. 170, 171.

³ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 55.

followed soon after and according to the *Panth Prakas* these were finished by 1691. This cannot be far off the mark, as we must place these events before 1692, the year of Bhim Chand's abdication, and though the Kahlur Raja had nothing to do with the expedition of Jujhar Singh, it is quite clear that much time could not have elapsed between the latter's defeat and the failure of Hussain Khan's expedition. Then we are told of the arrival of a son of Aurangzib in the Punjab,¹ who does not appear to have stayed long and was soon succeeded by Mirza Beg who proceeded to plunder all those who had taken refuge in the hills when they heard that the Prince was approaching. All who escaped Mirza Beg were afterwards punished by four other equally relentless officers who succeeded him. We have no means of determining how long these officers remained in the hills and how long their operations lasted.

Macauliffe does not say anything about the time of the Prince's arrival but, as he is inclined to place the composition of the *Bachitra Natak* in 1692,² he must be understood to have meant that the expeditions of the Prince, Mirza Beg and his four successors must have taken place before that year. The time allowed is evidently too short but how far it should be extended we cannot say as the Sikh records give us no assistance in the matter. On the other hand, they indicate a gap in the

¹ The name of the Prince is not mentioned in the *Bachitra Natak* but Macauliffe says it was Prince Muazzim who succeeded Aurangzib as Bahadur Shah. Malcolm is of opinion that this must have been in the year 1701 and curiously enough Malcolm is supported by the *Gur Bilas* (xii, 143-185'. Bhai Sukha Singh says that almost immediately after the creation of the Khalsa difficulties with the Hill Rajas commenced and in response to the prayer of the Hill chiefs two successive expeditions were sent by the Mughal authorities. But both were defeated and then a Prince was sent and after him Mirza Beg and the four other officers. But the circumstances under which the Prince came to the Punjab, as narrated in the *Bachitra Natak*, are totally different from those of 1701; moreover, Sukha Singh also places the various other incidents narrated in the *Bachitra Natak* previous to the introduction of his reforms and it becomes difficult to understand why the Guru would skip over a period abounding in interests of various kinds, and bring his account to a close by referring to an incident in which he had no direct concern.

² Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 1, f.n. 1.

public activities of the Guru from after the close of these incidents till the convening of the assembly at Keshgarh in 1699. At least for the latter part of this period of obscurity the Guru passed his days in the salubrious climate of the Naina Devi and was engaged in literary pursuits.¹ We are not told anything about the length of the Guru's stay in the hills but it appears that he could not have been very long in retirement because his letter written to the ancestors of the Phulkian Chiefs in which he invites them to aid him with their horsemen is dated *Samvat* 1753 or 1696 A.D.² We are quite in the dark as to what the Guru's difficulties at the time were and why he required this assistance. The Guru, however, does not tell us clearly whether the four successors of Mirza Beg came together or one after another and if they had really come one after another it may not be improbable that the Guru's anxiety to keep himself in a state of preparedness even in 1696 was due to the activities of one of these in the hills close to Anandpur.

This finishes our chronological survey of the pre-Khalsa period of Guru Gobind Singh's career. We have not said here anything with regard to the period preceding the battle of Bhangani because the main points have already been discussed in connection with the Guru's adventures. It will be seen that though it has been possible to evolve some sort of a workable scheme, based, more or less, on secure foundations, some uncertainties have remained and one or two gaps have been difficult to fill in. For instance, it has not been possible for us to say anything definite as to how long the Guru remained at

¹ It has already been stated that the *Ram Avatar* was finished here in 1698 and we think that the *Bachitra Natak* was also composed near about the same time. (See my article in *Indian Historical Quarterly*, September, 1925).

² The original letter, according to Bhai Kahn Singh, is preserved in Ala Singh's *Burj* at Patiala and a copy at Nabha. The text is given in *Mahan Kosh*, Vol. III, p. 1773. It is addressed to Tiloka and Rama. The Guru says that he was much pleased with them and that their house was his house. The Guru then asks them to come to him with their horsemen and the request is repeated, more than once, in very urgent terms. A dress of honour was also sent with the letter. It is dated *Bhadon* 2, *Samvat* 1753 (August, 1696).

Makhawal after his father's death and when he went to Paunta, though we have given our reasons for thinking that his earlier stay at Anandpur-Makhawal was rather short¹ and consequently he must have remained at Paunta for a much longer period than the Sikh records seem to indicate. And secondly, there is the gap which we have just discussed and which follows the close of the incidents narrated in the *Bachitra Natak*. Both these gaps are marked by a period of obscurity in the hills and we would repeat our belief that in later Sikh tradition the two were mixed up and became the foundation of the myth that the Guru passed the first twenty years of his pontificate in seclusion in the hills.

We shall now pass on to the post-Khalsa period, which is a much shorter one and where incidents follow one another in rather a quick succession. But still the chronology is, by no means, free from uncertainties. The only author, who might have been of sure assistance to us, is unfortunately silent with regard to most of the crucial points, and if we depend on the later Sikh records we are often led to inconsistent positions and are sometimes set at variance with the more correctly ascertained dates of contemporary Muhammadan history. For instance, Kartar Singh, who has apparently relied on the Sikh records, places the battle of Chamkaur early in 1705 and, at the same time, says that the Guru uttered his blessing on the Malwa land in 1704, while he was at Damdama.² Again, both he and Macauliffe say that the Guru reached Nander in August 1707 and stayed there for a year and two or three months.³ But we know from the Muhammadan sources that in August 1707 the Guru was still at Agra. Moreover, both Kartar Singh and Macauliffe are agreed that the Guru accompanied Bahadur Shah in his expedition to Rajputana and later passed on, in his train,

¹ Saina Pat only vaguely says that some years were passed at Makhawal before the Guru went to Paunta (*Gur Sobha*, ii,8).

² Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

³ Kartar Singh, *ibid.*, p. 247. Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 236.

We do not understand why J. N. Sarkar, who ought to have known better, says the same thing.

to the Deccan. Now, we know from the Muhammadan sources that after finishing his campaign Bahadur Shah crossed the Narmada to the Deccan on the 17th of May, 1708,¹ and marched on towards the south in order to deal with the rebellion of Kam Baksh. He crossed the Banganga on the 13th of August, 1708,² and it was on the 5th of November of the same year that he pitched his camp at Zafarabad Bidar, 67 miles north of Haidarabad.³ The Guru, therefore, must have stayed for a very short time at Nander, his death having occurred on the 18th October, 1708.⁴ Thus it is clear that the Sikh records can hardly be relied on, and as for the major part of the story we do not get any assistance from other sources, all conclusions must be regarded as tentative.

The post-Khalsa career of Guru Gobind Singh may conveniently be divided into several periods. First, we have the Guru's hostilities with the Hill chiefs and the Mughal authorities ending in the evacuation of Anandpur; secondly, the period of wanderings that began with the battle of Chamkaur and ended with the battle of Khidrana or Muktsar; thirdly, the Guru's stay at Damdama; and lastly, his start for the south and his wanderings and exploits in the company of Bahadur Shah. Now, we are told that hostilities commenced in 1700⁵ and the Guru finally left Anandpur towards the close of 1704.⁶ We are further told that the first phase of the struggle ending in the Guru's return to Anandpur after his temporary retirement to Basali was probably closed by 1702.⁷ But the account given in the *Gur Sobhā* does not warrant the allocation of a long period of three years to the first phase of the quarrel with the Hill chiefs. Saina Pat, who was very probably living at Anandpur at the time, speaks of a period of peace lasting for a little more than two years but the later records, as we have seen, fill this

¹ Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 50.

² Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁵ Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179. *Gur Bilas*, xxi, 14.

⁷ Kartar Singh, *ibid.*, p. 152.

up by several stray battles near Anandpur and elsewhere. If we take the *Gur Sobha* as our guide, as we must, it seems clear that the later chroniclers have mixed up the first phase of the quarrel with the period of peace and assigned to the first a duration which in reality belongs to the two together. The renewal of hostilities must therefore be placed towards the beginning of 1703 and the phase that now commenced could, by no means, have lasted for more than a year. It thus appears that the battle of Chamkaur should be placed towards the beginning of 1704 and not at the beginning of 1705.

The period following the battle of Chamkaur is the darkest in the Guru's life. The emissaries of Wazir Khan were now searching for him in every direction and he was wandering as a fugitive from place to place, sometimes in one guise and sometimes in another, till at last, after the battle of Muktsar, he got a breathing time and passed some days in comparative peace at Damdama. He left Damdama for the south and he had proceeded some distance when he came to hear the news of Aurangzib's death, which took place on the 3rd of March, 1707.¹ Thus his wanderings as a fugitive and his stay at Damdama together comprised some three years, roughly from the earlier part of 1704 to the end of 1706. Now, the *Gur Bilas* states that the Guru halted at Damdama for nine months and nine days.² This gives Damdama a period which appears to us too short and leaves to the Guru's wanderings a duration which again is apparently too long. There is, however, another tradition which says that the Guru halted at Damdama for a period of three years, minus some months and days.³ It appears to us that the second tradition is perhaps nearer to the truth of the matter. The Guru's stay at Damdama was marked by great literary activity on his part. A new recension of the *Granth Sahib* was compiled, wherein were now added the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur and a *slok* of his own and it is also certain that a part, at least, of his own works was composed

¹ Irvine, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 1.

² *Gur Bilas*, xxiii, 166.

³ *Sakhi Book*, Sardar Attar Singh's translation, No. 59.

here.¹ On the other hand, "secure in his new retreat (at Damdama) Govind re-established his court, and surrounded himself with all the pomp and circumstances of royalty. Damdama became the centre of Sikhism, and a place of resort for learned men from all parts of the country. Numberless new recruits joined the ranks of the Khalsa and the position of Govind Singh became stronger than ever before." All these could not certainly have been achieved in the bare space of nine months and it seems that on this point at least the later tradition cannot be far off the mark.

As we have seen, it was from Damdama that the Guru started for the south and he appears to have retraced his steps when he heard the news of Aurangzib's death. Thereafter he must have joined Bahadur Shah at some point soon after the battle of Jajau which was fought on the 18th of June, 1707. Henceforth the Guru's movements are bound up with those of Bahadur Shah and the more definitely ascertained chronology of Mughal history comes to our rescue.

¹ Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 223.

APPENDIX C

Bachitra Natak

[The main historical interest of the *Bachitra Natak*, which may be regarded as an autobiography of Guru Gobind Singh, is concentrated in seven sections, *viz.*, the seventh to the thirteenth. Macauliffe gives us an English translation of the first seven chapters of the work¹ as well as of the last, but these important sections are omitted, the author giving it as his reason that as all the details narrated there had been incorporated in the general biography of the Guru, no separate translation seemed necessary. Unfortunately, from Macauliffe's account of the life of the Guru, it is not possible to determine which portions of it are based on the *Bachitra Natak* and where the other Sikh records are laid under contribution. In spite of its limitations, the *Bachitra Natak* is undoubtedly the most important of all the records about Guru Gobind Singh and it is essential that we should know what it has got to tell us independently. An English version of these sections of the *Bachitra Natak* is, therefore, a desideratum. The Guru's descriptions, however, are animated and sometimes full of repetitions. We have, therefore, omitted some of these but, on the whole we believe that nothing has been left out, which can be of any use to the student of political history.]

¹ The third section is, however, skipped over but on the other hand we are given an English translation of the first three verses of the eighth section, another extract from which is incorporated in Macauliffe's account of the battle of Bhangani. Malcolm also incorporates another extract from this section in his *Sketch of the Sikhs*. These we have used freely and we take this opportunity of acknowledging our indebtedness to their authors. I also take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to Prof. Teja Singh, who also helped me substantially in preparing this translation. I may add here that for the purpose of this translation I have used the printed text published by Gulab Singh and Sons and the annotated edition of Bhai Bishan Singh Gyani.

I. SECTION VIII.

The Battle of Bhangani.

When I obtained sovereignty I conducted religious affairs to the best of my ability. I hunted various sorts of game in the forest and killed bears, nilgaus and elks.

Afterwards I left home and went to the place called Paunta. I enjoyed myself on the banks of the Kalindri and saw amusements of various kinds.

There I hunted and killed many lions, nilgaus and bears. Fateh Shah, the king, became angry and came to blows with me without any reason.

There Sri Shah raged and the five stately heroes took their position firmly on the field of battle—the tenacious Jit Mal and the desperate hero Gulab, whose graceful figures on the battle-field were wondrous to behold,—the determined Maheri Chand and Gangaram, who defeated and shattered the enemy's forces. Lalchand raged becoming red with anger and his bravery cast into shade even the pride of the peerless lion.

Maheru raged with a fearful expression and killed the brave Khans in battle. The most godly Dayaram rushed into the fray with great anger and fought bravely and skilfully like Drona of old.

Kripal advanced with a mace in his hand and smashed the head of the fierce Hayat Khan.

* * *

Then Nand Chand rushed into the fray with dreadful ire, wielding his spear and brandishing his sword. His keen sword broke but he drew out his dagger and with great determination saved the honour of the Sodhi race.

Then uncle Kripal advanced in his rage and exhibited the war feats of a true Kshatriya. The mighty hero was himself struck by an arrow but nevertheless made a valiant Khan fall from his saddle.

The brave Saheb Chand entered into the fray and slew a

bloody Khan. The stately hero wrought havoc in the enemy's ranks and those that survived fled with their lives.

There Sri Shah exhibited feats of valour and trampled under foot many bloodthirsty Khans. (On the other side) Raja Gopal stood erect on the field and looked like a lion amidst a herd of deer.

There raged the great hero Hari Chand who skilfully took his position in the field. In great anger he discharged sharp arrows and those whom he struck he sent to the other world.

* * *

Then Jit Mal aimed with his spear and struck Hari Chand down to the ground.

* * *

The bloody Khans drew out their Khorasan swords, the keen edges of which flashed like fire. The bows twanged, sending out swarms of arrows. The spirited horses fell under the heavy blows.

How far shall I describe the mighty battle! Those who fought (in the front) were killed and thousands fled.

The Hill chiefs spurred their horses and fled; the soldiers retired with their arrows undischarged. The Rajas of Jaswal and Dadhwal, who had been fighting with zeal, now left the field with all their forces.

The Raja of Chandel became exhausted and perplexed, when the tenacious Hari Chand rose with a spear in hand. He became immediately alive to the duties of a leader and raged furiously. Those who opposed him were cut to pieces and fell.

Then Najabet Khan entered and directed his weapons against Shah Sangram. Several well-equipped Khans joined in the attack and sent Shah Sangram to the other world.

After having killed Najabet Khan Shah Sangram fell fighting. There were lamentations in this world but rejoicings in heaven.

When this insignificant creature saw Shah Sangram fall in battle he took up his bow and arrows. With the first arrow

I struck a Khan . . . who fell to the ground. I then drew out another and aimed at the face of Bhikhan Khan. The bloody Khan fled leaving his horse, whom the third arrow struck and killed.

After waking up from his swoon Hari Chand directed his shots with unerring aim and then those whom he struck fell senseless and died.

* * *

In his anger Hari Chand drew out his arrows. His first arrow struck my horse. He aimed another at me but God saved me, the arrow only grazing my ear in its flight.

His third arrow penetrated the buckle of my waist-belt and reached my body, but wounded me not. It is only God who protected me, knowing me his servant.

When I felt the touch of the arrow, my wrath was kindled. I took up my bow and began to discharge arrows in abundance.

* * *

I killed Hari Chand and the enemies were trampled under foot. (Even) the millionaire chief was seized by death.

The hillmen fled from the field of battle, all fears vanished and I, through the favour of the eternal God, gained the victory.

Having thus held the battle-field, we raised aloud the song of triumph. I showered wealth on my warriors and they all rejoiced.

When I returned after the victory I did not remain at Paunta. I went to Kahlur and there established the village of Anandpur.

Those who had kept themselves away from the battle, I drove out of the place; and I patronised those who had distinguished themselves there.

Many days passed in this way and I fostered the faithful and rooted out all the wicked.

* * *

II. SECTION IX.

The battle of Nadaun.

Many days passed in this way till Miyan Khan of Jammu came and sent Alif Khan to Nadaun. Immediately quarrel broke out with Bhim Chand.

The Raja called me to assist him in the war and I joined his side. The enemy had erected a wooden fort there on a mound and brought the chiefs under control by means of guns and arrows.

There came Raj Singh and the powerful Bhim Chand, the vigorous and manly Ram Singh and the brave Sukhdev of Jassrot, and they managed everything with zeal and enthusiasm.

There came also the determined Prithi Chand of Dadhwar, fully prepared and after having made arrangements for the government of his realm. Kripal Chand arrived with ammunitions and drove back and killed many of the brave men (of Bhim Chand).

When second time the forces (of Bhim Chand) advanced, they were beaten back downward to his great chagrin. Those standing above were rejoicing and sounding bugles; the Raja standing below was greatly annoyed.

Then Bhim Chand himself raged, uttering the *mantra* of Hanuman in his mouth. He called all the heroes and myself too. All assembled and advanced in order.

All the great heroes entered into the fray in great anger and advanced, just as a flame advances over a fence of dry weeds (burning it in its train). On the other side, the valiant Raja Dayal of Bijharwal advanced with Raja Kripal, together with all his forces.

* * *

Then Kripal raged, standing erect on the field of battle with great determination. He discharged arrows in abundance and killed many heroes.

* * *

He made a great fight and the row was heard throughout the nine quarters of the world. His weapons wrought havoc (in the enemy's ranks) and he exhibited the true virtues of a Rajput.

Then the allies, in great anger, warmed up their battle and rushing forward hemmed in the troops of Katoch.

The people of the tribes of Nanglu and Panglu advanced in order together with the forces of *Jaswar and Guler*. The great hero Dayal also joined and saved the honour of the people of Bijharwal.

Then this insignificant creature (the Guru) took up his gun and aimed at one of the Rajas. The Raja reeled and fell upon the ground, so unerringly was the shot directed, but even then the angry chief thundered.

I then threw off the gun and took up arrows in my hand. I drew out four and discharged all of them. Then again I took three others and discharged them with my left hand (though) whether they struck anybody or not I do not know.

Then the Almighty God hastened the end of the fight and the enemy were driven out into the river.

* * *

Alaf Khan fled and all the other heroes retreated precipitately. I remained there on the bank of the river for eight days and visited the palaces of the various Rajas.

Then I took leave of the Rajas and returned home and they proceeded higher up to settle terms of peace. The two parties came to terms and therefore the story ends.

I came back here after having plundered Alsun (on my way) and, having reached Anandpur, enjoyed myself in various ways.

III. SECTION X.

The expedition of the Khansada.

Many years passed in this way and all the thieves (the dis-

affected) were hunted out and killed. Some left the city but came back in utter destitution.

Then Dilawar Khan sent his son against me. When the night had advanced a few hours the Khans assembled and prepared for attack.

When the party reached the bank of the river, Alam came and woke me up. There was a great row; everybody stirred up and took up their weapons with fiery zeal.

Immediately volleys of shots were discharged. The heroes shouted in various ways and the noise was heard even on the other side of the river.

Drums beat, bugles blew, the soldiers thundered, horses danced, the guns roared and all mingled in one huge uproar.

The river wore a dreadful appearance and the soldiers (of the enemy) were cramped with cold. On top of this my heroes thundered and the bloody Khans fled with their weapons unused.

* * *

On their way they plundered the village of Barwa and established themselves at Bhallan. Through the favour of God, the wretched fools could not even touch me and fled.

IV. SECTION XI.

The expedition of Hussain Khan.

The Khanzada fled to his father but, being ashamed of his own cowardly conduct, he could not utter a single word. There Hussain thundered, striking his arms in pride and, with all his brave companions prepared for attack.

Emboldened by the strength of his army Hussain advanced. First he plundered the houses (of the hillmen). Then he defeated the Raja of Dadhwal, brought him completely under control and made slaves of the princes.

Next, Hussain thoroughly looted the Dun, nobody being able to withstand the barbarian. He took away food grains by force and distributed them among his own followers. The big fool thus committed a very dirty act.

Some days passed and Hussain went on with his depredations. Now the turn of meeting the Raja of Guler came.

If they had not met for two days more the enemy chief would have come (upon me, but) destiny had thrown the apple of discord amidst them.

The Raja of Guler came to meet (Hussain) and with him came Ram Singh too. When four quarters of the day had passed they arrived and met Hussain, the slave, who felt extremely flattered and became blind in his vanity.

Just as sand becomes heated by the heat of the sun but the wretched thing does not know the sun and becomes proud of itself.

Similarly, the slave (Hussain), in his vanity, did not even condescend to notice them. With the Rajas of Katoch and Kahlur at his side, he thought that he was peerless in this world.

They (Gopal and Ram Singh) offered Hussain the money they had brought with them. In this matter of giving and taking some differences arose and they returned to their own place with the money.

At this the slave became very angry and lost all sense of good or bad. He did not pause to consider the ways and means but at once ordered the beating of the drum for advance.

He threw all tactical considerations to the wind. The hare surrounded the lion for the purpose of overawing him. He kept them invested for 15 *pahars* (about 45 hours) and did not allow either food or drink to pass.

The soldiers became indignant at the want of food and drink and Gopal sent a messenger for the purpose of making peace. Beholding his valiant Pathan soldiers around him, the slave lost his balance and did not agree to the proposal.

"Either give me ten thousand rupees immediately or take death upon your head," (he said) : I (the Guru) had sent Sangatia there and he brought Gopal (to the enemy's camp), giving him assurance (for his safety).

The two sides could not agree and then Kripal thus thought within himself—"such an opportunity will never come again; time, in its circle, deceives every body."

"Gopal must immediately be taken hold of—either he must be made a prisoner or be killed." When Gopal got scent of these intrigues, he, the king of heroes, escaped to his own men.

When Gopal was gone, Kripal raged in his fury. Himmat and Hussain (joined) and rushed into the fray.

* * *

Then raged the Raja of Kangra and Katoch, his face and eyes red in anger, and his mind free from all other considerations. From another quarter the Khans entered arrows in hand, and it seemed that leopards were roaming in quest of flesh.

* * *

There had been fighting a hero named Hari Singh, who received, in his body, many arrows from the enemy. In great anger he killed many of the soldiers and, after exhibiting a great fight, went to the other world.

Himmat advanced with a sword in hand. Jalal Khan joined with a mace. The determined heroes fought, intoxicated as it were. Blows followed blows and weapons crowded upon one another.

The Raja of Jaswal rushed forward on horseback and surrounding Hussain struck his lance at him.

* * *

Then Hussain himself entered into the thick of the fight. All took up bows and arrows. The fierce Khans, with faces and eyes red with indignation, commenced a great fight.

The fight was most terrible; the armies were exhausted. Hussain still stood there like a hero. The forces of Jaswal fell on him. His horsemen were cut down like shreds of cloth.

But Hussain still stood there alone, like the staff of a battle-

flag rooted in the ground. Whoever was struck with an arrow from his bow was pierced through and through.

Then all those who were struck with his arrows came together and fell on him. From all sides arose the cry, 'kill, kill.' They wielded their weapons with great effect and at last Hussain Khan fell and went to the other world.

* * *

(When they saw Hussain Khan fall) all the soldiers of Katoch advanced in their rage, together with the indignant Himmat. Hari Singh also came forward at that time and killed many valiant horsemen, especially selecting them for the purpose.

Then the Raja of Katoch raged, carefully selecting his position in the field. He wielded his weapons with unerring aim, thundering death (upon his opponents).

(From the other side) raged the Raja of Chandel and all attacked indignantly in a body. Those who had entered into the fray were killed and those (who had remained behind) fled with their lives.

Sangat Rai died with his seven companions. On the death of Kripal in the battle Gopal rejoiced. When the leaders fell the soldiers all fled in disorder.

* * *

In this way the enemies were all killed and they began to take care of their own dead. There they found the wounded Himmat and Ram Singh spoke thus to Gopal—

"That Himmat, who has been the root of all these quarrels, has now fallen wounded in our hands." When Gopal heard this he killed Himmat and did not allow the latter to get up alive.

Victory came and the battle ended. The soldiers remembered their homes and proceeded thither. The Lord saved me (from unnecessary warfare) by making the cloud of battle rain elsewhere.

V. SECTION XII.

The expedition of Jujhar Singh.

In this manner fight continued *endlessly* and the leader of the Muhammadans was killed. Dilawar became very angry and sent another army (in this direction).

From his side came Jujhar Singh, who immediately drove out the enemy from Bhallan. On this side Gaj Singh mobilised his troops and fell upon him early in the morning.

There Jujhar Singh stood erect like a flag-post planted on the field of battle. Even the post might waver but the brave Rajput did not flinch.....

The soldiers of both parties moved in detachments, the Raja of Chandel on that side and on this side, the Raja of Jaswar. They were all fired with indignation and the fight commenced.

* * *

The battle continued with great vigour on both sides. Chandan Rai was killed when Jujhar Singh alone continued the fight. He was soon surrounded from all sides.

Without any hesitation he rushed into the enemy's ranks, wielded his weapons with great dexterity, killed many of the valiant soldiers and at last himself went to the other world.

VI. SECTION XIII.

The arrival of the Shahzada.

In this manner Jujhar met his death and the soldiers returned to their homes. Then Aurangzib became very angry and sent his son to the Punjab.

At his approach all were frightened and fled to the hills. Me also the people tried to frighten as they did not understand the ways of the Almighty.

Some left me and took shelter where the big hills stood. The cowards did not know where their safety lay. Then the son

of Aurangzib became very angry and sent a subordinate in this direction, who pulled down the habitations of those who had left me.

The successors of both Baba Nanak and Babar were created by God Himself. Recognize the former as a spiritual and the latter as a temporal king.

Babar's successors shall seize and plunder those who deliver not the Guru's money.

The name of the officer who destroyed the homes of the apostates was Mirza Beg. The Guru himself saved all those who remained true to him.

There Aurangzib's son's anger knew no bounds and he sent four other officers. These plundered the houses of all those apostates who had escaped Mirza Beg Khan.

APPENDIX D

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The works, mentioned already in the Bibliography appended to Vol. I and which have a bearing on the period covered by this volume as well, have been omitted.

I. *Gurumukhi*

Dasam Pādshāh Kā Granth or the Book of the Tenth Guru.

There are two different versions of a Sikh tradition about the composition of the *Granth* by Guru Gobind Singh. The story runs that after his accession to the *gaddi* of his father, the Guru sent for the *Granth Sāhib* of Guru Arjan which was in the hands of Dhir Mal at Kiratpur. As is well known, Dhir Mal was no friend of Guru Tegh Bahadur and he is said to have retorted that, if Guru Gobind Singh was the real Guru and if the light of Guru Nanak was in him, it was quite within his powers to produce another such *Granth*. The Guru accepted the challenge but here the tradition splits and we have two versions of what followed. Some say that the Guru accordingly composed the *Dasam Pādshāh Kā Granth* (T. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 216; Court, *op. cit.*, p. 43), while others assert that it was this refusal of Dhir Mal to hand over the *Granth Sāhib* of Guru Arjan that led him to dictate the whole of the *Granth* to Bhai Mani Singh during his residence at Damdama (*Panth Prakās*, p. 255; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 223; *Itihās Guru Khālsā*, p. 338).

Cunningham seems to have accepted the first version, for he says that at Damdama the Guru occupied himself in composing the supplemental *Granth*, or the Book of the Tenth King, to rouse the energies and sustain the hopes of the faithful (*op. cit.*, p. 80). But this cannot be wholly true. The *Dasam Granth* is a huge, unwieldy medley of heterogeneous matter and there is clear internal evidence that different parts of it were written by different writers at different times. The Guru is said to have kept fifty-two bards in his employ,

the names of some of whom are given in the *Panth Prakās* (p. 164, f.n.). Together with these the Guru had commenced translations and abridged versions of the more important of the Hindu mythological works, and from a few references, here and there, it appears that much of it had been completed even before 1699 (*Panth Prakās*, p. 164; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 67; Kartar Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 99). This, however, does not rule out the possibility that a part of it might have been written at Damdama. Narang says that the Guru compiled the *Dasam Granth* at Damdama (*op. cit.*, p. 166) but we know from the Sikh records that the compilation by Bhai Mani Singh took place twenty-six years after the Guru's death (Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 223, f.n.).

Narang says: "The collection does not do credit to the Guru's name and much of it, except the Guru's own compositions, might well have been omitted. The book does not command much respect among cultured Sikhs who look upon most of the contents as spurious." (*op. cit.*, p. 364). This may be quite true but still the importance of the work to a student of history should not be minimised. The importance of the *Bacitra Nāṭak* has already been clearly emphasised and the usefulness of the Guru's other writings, particularly with regard to his views on sundry matters, can, by no means, be underrated. The prefatory remarks to some of the translations done by the Guru himself and the dates of their composition given at the end throw light on disputed points, and some of the other works, which are to be attributed to the bards in the Guru's employ, are not wholly useless, as "they serve as an excellent index to the part played in Guru Govind Singh's life and activities by Hindu theology, mythology, philosophy, history and literature." On the other hand, a large part of the work consisting of portions like the *Strī Charitra* are useless to us, whatever their value to the student of literature might be.

A table of contents of the work is given by Narang (*op. cit.*, Appendix I, pp. 365-367) and T. Banerjee (*op. cit.*, Chapter xvii).

Gur Sobhā by Saina Pat.

Next to the Guru's own compositions it is the most important of the sources on Guru Gobind Singh. Saina Pat, the author, was one of

the bards in the Guru's employ and was thus one of his closest associates. He appears to have been an eye-witness of some of the incidents that he narrates and describes others on the basis of what he had heard from reliable persons (viii, 7). It is practically the only contemporary narrative so far as the post-Khālsā period of the Guru's career is concerned and thus its importance is self-evident. Saina Pat says that he began the work in Bhadar, Sambat 1758, which is equivalent to August-September, 1701. (*Gur Sobhā*, i, 6). Some, however, read the word "*aṭhāvan*" (fifty-two) as "*aṭhānav*" (ninety-eight) and say that the work was finished in 1741. We, however, prefer the earlier date because we can think of no reason why Saina Pat, who was a poet and a man of literary attainments, would defer the writing of the work to a time when he must have grown a very old man. But, at any rate, the fact remains that this is the only chronicle that has been left by a close associate of the Guru and therefore must be given a foremost place among the sources on Guru Gobind Singh's life and career.

Gur Bilās (Life of the Sixth Guru).

The name of the author is not known. It is, however, stated in the preface that he had heard the story from one Dharm Singh who was present at Nankana at the time when Bhai Mani Singh recited it. Mani Singh, in his turn, had gathered the story from Bhai Daya Singh, who again had heard it from Guru Gobind Singh. The work is said to have been completed in 1718 A.D. Macauliffe, however, says that in the opinion of Kahn Singh, "the work was compiled by Bhai Gurmukh Singh and Bhai Darbara Singh, a priest and a chorister respectively of the Sikh temple at Amritsar, and that they began their literary labour in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and finished it in the reign of Maharaja Sher Singh." Whatever the truth about its origin might be, the work is overloaded with legends and myths and is not of much use for purposes of history.

Gur Bilās (Life of the Tenth Guru) by Bhai Sukha Singh.

Bhai Sukha Singh was an inhabitant of Anandpur and an expounder of the *Granth* at Keshgarh, where Guru Gobind Singh had introduced the new method of initiation by *pāhul*. He was thus very intimately associated with the tract where the most important part of

the Guru's career was played. He completed his work in 1797. In the meanwhile many legends must have grown about Guru Gobind Singh and some of these are, no doubt, incorporated in Sukha Singh's account. Nevertheless, it is the earliest and the best of all the later records and, used with discrimination, can yet be made to yield some results.

II. *Persian*

Of the sources under this head some are Sikh and some non-Sikh. Of the former the following are the most important:—

(1) The "*Zāfarnāmā*" or Persian epistle to Aurangzib, believed to have been written by Guru Gobind Singh at Dina, where he halted for some time, in between Chamkaur and Khidrana. We think, however, that it embodies a later and modified version, and its authenticity, it seems to us, is not entirely free from doubt.

(2) "*Zindagi Nāmā*" and other Persian poems by Bhai Nand Lal, apparently the same person who is said to have been the intermediary between the Guru and Bahadur Shah. These are not of much importance so far as the actual events of the Guru's career are concerned but "his works show what a deep reverence the Guru's personality could inspire in those who saw him and elucidate many of the principles of Sikh religion."

Of the latter group several works have been mentioned in the text as well as in the footnotes. Unfortunately the contemporary Muḥammadan chronicles are mostly silent with regard to the events of Sikh history. We come across only stray references here and there, and these also are very few and far between. They, no doubt, help us in checking the traditional records on a few points and also, to some extent, with regard to chronology. But the sum-total is so meagre that these can hardly be regarded as sources, properly so called. This should serve as an eye-opener to those who would not touch the Sikh chronicles even with a pair of tongs. Apart from the fact that without a study of Sikh literature a true perspective of Sikh history can never be obtained, these advocates of Muslim chronicles should remember that there can be no cut and dried method in historical studies. There are, no doubt, certain broad principles which have got to be adhered

to at all events, but the method must vary from time to time and from subject to subject, according to the nature of the materials available for each. If these people are waiting for something to crop up, they may have to wait till Doomsday.

III. *English*

Later Mughals, Vol. I, by William Irvine.

The account of the Sikhs during the Guru period is scrappy and weak with respect to the Sikh sources. But it is invaluable because of the few references that it gives from the contemporary Persian chronicles.

Life of Guru Gobind Singh by Kartar Singh.

The writer is more concerned in removing what he considers as slurs on the memory of the Guru than in giving a correct account of the Guru's life.

Sikhism—its Ideals and Institutions, by Teja Singh.

A very good and useful work.

The following also have been found useful, one way or other:—

Punjab Castes by Denzil Ibbetson.

Punjab Customary Law by Tupper.

Simla Hill States Gazetteer.

APPENDIX E

GLOSSARY

(*Words with diacritical marks*)

Āsā di Vār	Karā
Bacitra Nāṭak	Karmnāsh
Bandi Chhor Bābā	Karor rāyan
Banswārā	Kātik sudi panchamī
Beimān	Khālsā
Bhaḍḍanis	Khānzādā
Bhagauti-ki-wār	Kripāṇ
Charanpāhul	Kritnāsh
Chhakānā	Kulnāsh
Darbār	Kurimārs
Devī	Manjā
Dhirmaliās	Minās
Dhuān	Panch Piyāre
Fakīr	Parsād
Faujdār	Patāshās
Gītā	Paurī
Granth Sāhib	Rām Rāyees
Grās daiye bās nā daiye	Sachchā Pādshāh
Gurdwārā	Sālagrām
Holi	Sākhī
Itihās Guru Khālsā	Shāhzādā
Iapjī (of Guru Nanak)	Subāhdār
Jāpji (of Guru Gobind Singh)	Sultān
Jāts	Uch kā Pir
Jai Jagmāt	Vār (or) Wār
Jogi	Wāhguru jī kā Khālsā Wāhguru
Kanghā	jī kā Fateh

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